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The
Devil's
Pulpit

E. B. Carrington
Watson



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“Wade reached the cliff, turned, threw up his hand again in a graceful swaggering gesture” (p. 179)

THE DEVIL'S PULPIT

BY

H. B. MARRIOTT WATSON

AUTHOR OF "GALLOPING DICK,"
"HURRICANE ISLAND," ETC.

ILLUSTRATED

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CHAPTER I

THE SCARLET RUNNER

THIS story begins in the comfortable bar-parlour of the George Hotel, Southampton. It may be said to open then, even if I go back to the moment when I set eyes on the little man, with the long comforter about his neck, who at the time seemed of no consequence to me or my tale. For on that sharp April afternoon as I passed along the hall I threw a glance into the bar, usually haunted by several gentlemanly loafers, and my eyes were arrested by his queer figure.

He wore a slouch hat, very wide of brim, and his red knitted comforter emerged above his overcoat and covered his scraggy neck up to the grey hair, and his hand that held a glass of brandy shook, I supposed, with cold. For the harbour was full of east wind, and the streets were blowing raw. The man's appearance made a faint impression on me, only because of its oddity. He looked so piteously insignificant that I was moved to a passing sense of compassion. I should have liked to put him before a fire and warm him; but, as a matter of fact, I passed on and out, with this mere glimpse of him, and, once in the street, I thought no more of him.

The threads of destiny are knit and shorn for us in unexpected places, and here at Southampton, and in

the George, were mine and those of others being united even then. But I will come back to the George presently. I walked down to the quays briskly, having an appointment there with a sea-captain, who had been a shipmate of mine some time since, and we enjoyed a chat and a glass of toddy in his cabin. And he comes only into this narrative in that it was from him I heard a piece of news that directed my footsteps when I left him. He nodded out towards the water.

"Ever meet Skinnersley? No? I had an idea you shipped with him. That's his show, with the striped funnels."

"Oh, a Cape Coach," said I, recognising the brand.

"Yes; he got in an hour ago—raced one of the rival lines from the Cape—one of Charlesworth's Scarlet Runners, as they call 'em, from the colour. Beat her too on the post." He laughed. "Guess the Scarlet Runner's run up against trouble. Signalled somewhere off Plymouth she was short of coal; that comes of making an early start, and not picking it up at Madeira. He's death on pace, and a fool, is Wade."

"Wade?" I asked quickly. "Mark Wade?"

"That's the hero," said my friend; "know him? Well, a short life and a merry one, I should say, was his motto. In our business, Herapath, we play for safety."

It was certainly true of him, and I liked him none the less for it; but there is a certain attraction in the brilliant adventurer, and I had a frank weakness for Mark Wade, who was an old acquaintance. Therefore

when I left my captain I strolled farther down to make an inquiry. Presently I came upon a little knot of seafarers in conversation, and stopped.

"Is the *Cape Horn* due, do you know?" I asked.

One of the men laughed. "There she comes, if I'm not mistaken," he replied with the easy familiarity of a sailor to his kind. "Burnt up all her fixtures by this time, I shouldn't wonder. There she goes," as a rocket went up in the evening twilight. "Now, that's the stuff he's made of. Wade will always make a splash."

"I'll be hanged if he can get farther than the Solent," said another of the group. We all watched with interest.

The *Cape Horn* slowly toddled up Southampton Water, her flags flying. Mark Wade would die game, and make no poor mouth.

"Burnt all his bulkheads coming up the Channel," explained one of the men to me. "It's a case of firing in two senses, eh?"

There was a general laugh. The news was about, brought, no doubt, by the Cape Coach that had run neck and neck with Wade's Scarlet Runner. But Wade was arriving undaunted. It was like his impudence; bold as brass, he steamed up and cast anchor in the Water.

"See his face when he comes ashore," said my interlocutor. "He's got half-an-hour with the agents, I shouldn't wonder."

The group dispersed, but I hung about, waiting,

partly out of curiosity, and partly, I think, out of something better. Wade would need some sympathy to meet him ashore. All the idlers on the quays knew the story by this time; it was passing from tongue to tongue, no doubt with exaggerations. He would land, a laughing-stock, the butt of all eyes, a target for the shafts of wit and sally. I saw him put off from the liner.

I was now aware that by me was a clean-shaven young man with rather long fair hair, who was watching the approach of the small boat through the twilight. He turned to me, addressing me with a certain formality, but yet with assurance, and I knew his nationality almost before he opened his mouth.

"I guess it won't be any fun for that captain presently," he said.

"He's got a warm quarter with his directors, if what they say is true," I returned.

"Well, come to think of it, he's had his fun, and that turns out square," said the young man philosophically. "He can't complain."

On my other side I suddenly heard a voice raised in a question, and I looked round. I saw the wizened elderly little man in the comforter.

"Pardon, could you tell me if the Hamburg ship comes to Southampton to-night?"

The Gallicism of this was obvious at once, not only in the intonation and accent, but in the fatal "th," which seems only reproducible by Englishmen and Spaniards.

"No; to-morrow's the day," I told him.

His face puckered in wrinkles, which probably indicated a frown, but his face, it was obvious, must fall into wrinkles whatever emotion he displayed. I guessed this exhibition for disappointment, though it might as easily have passed for satisfaction. It was his voice that enabled me to arrive at the proper solution.

"Ah, I've been misinformed," he said sadly. "I read it was to-day."

"No," I answered; "the German boat leaves Southampton to-morrow, and goes by Cherbourg."

"Cherbourg!" he echoed, and lifted one mittened hand to his mouth. It trembled, as the hand which had held the glass in the bar-parlour had trembled. I remembered that I had pitied him for being so cold, which returning sense of his wretchedness made me now continue.

"You're bound for New York, monsieur?"

"No—yes; at least I think so," he replied confusedly, and quickly turned away.

"I reckon," observed my American friend, who had been listening, "that they'll stop a figure like that at Ellis Island. He's an offence against our Contract Laws—guess he's engaged by a dime museum."

I walked across to the top of the quay, which the boat was now approaching, and looked down. I could see Mark Wade in the stern, rudder in hand, coming ashore like an admiral in his gig. He called out a direction, and in another moment she bumped the steps.

Wade came over the side of the quay into the centre of a small and interested crowd. I stepped quickly forward.

"Wade!" said I.

His eyes lightened. "Halloa, old chap," he returned. "Glad to see you. Come along, and let's have a talk."

I took his arm, and we passed quickly along the quay towards the town, followed by the flight of many eyes. I took Wade to the George, and we entered the bar-parlour.

Now the George has two bar-parlours, only separated by a partition which does not ascend to the ceiling; one of them was empty, and of this we took possession. Mark Wade sank into a chair, and took the whisky and soda I had ordered for him at a draught.

"I needed that," he said slowly, and looked at me.

"I suppose I know," I returned to that look.

Wade smiled, and his smile was always pleasant. He had bright, changing blue eyes, fair, short hair, and an upcurling moustache. He was thirty-five or so, and had rather a swaggering air. His face was full-fleshed and bronzed.

"The order of the bag," he remarked, smiling even more pleasantly. "Well, I had a good time, and I'm damned if I shouldn't have beat Skinnersley, but for an accident to one of the engines. If I'd had you, old boy, I'd have won."

"And we should both have been out of employment," I remarked drily.

He shrugged his shoulders. "Well, you are already, Ned, so that brings us to where we were. Anyway, I'm gone. I don't know that it's not a good thing. I'm tired of the route. I'll try China or the South Pacific. Not that there's no fun Africa way. There was a mighty pretty girl out Capetown this trip that would take any amount of sparking. A woman on shipboard, Ned, is the deuce of a flirt. They can be very warm; but you've got to be fatherly and avuncular if you're the old man; and that's the worst. Damned if I wouldn't sooner be permanent second officer."

He laughed irresponsibly, and I corrected him.

"No, doctor," I said; "other things don't count where there's a doctor about—certainly not an engineer."

"Oh, you don't count anyway," he said cheerfully. "See, what's the matter with dining with me to-night? I want to fix up things aboard, and then I'm done. I'm not going to march in red-tape ribbons up to Charlesworth's counter. I'm my own man by now. What do you say?"

As I had nothing before me for the evening, I said yes, and Wade rose to go. As he did so I noticed his full, frank gaze levelled at someone who had just entered from the lounge in the hall.

"Captain Wade, I guess?"

I turned and there was my American, his boyish face pleasantly smiling and an ingratiating air of assurance in his manner.

"That's me," said Wade shortly, looking the other up and down.

"Captain Wade, I'm not waiting for any introductions, for I guess I can't. I'm just marching in right away. Anyway, you can put this down as business." Wade pulled out his watch. "Oh, it can be fixed up, yes or no, in half-an-hour, sir, so if you'll be good enough to resume that seat, and," he glanced at the counter, "that glass, we can get along at once." Here his eyes fell on me, and he nodded in a friendly way. "Took the liberty of following you up," he remarked cheerfully.

Wade settled himself in his seat, waiting. His face was shrewd and contained now, even showing a certain hardness. Here was a stranger introducing himself for an unknown purpose. It was certainly a case for suspicion. It flashed through my mind that the man was an enterprising reporter, anxious to interview a fool on his folly. Perhaps that idea occurred to Wade also, for there was a metallic glint in his eyes.

"Say, what's yours?" asked the American, approaching the bar. The barmaid poured out two jorums of whisky, and the young man appeared to ponder and hesitate, and then, "Well, give me just a little," he entreated, and on a very small allowance of spirit lavished a great deal of water. "I'm not much in this line myself," he explained, took a sip, and turned to Wade confidentially.

"That little joke of yours is going to be expensive," he remarked.

Wade flushed, and frowned, and then laughed. "What the devil if it is?" he asked. "It's my own affair."

"That's so," remarked the American thoughtfully, "if you want to keep it so. But you can spread your liability, so to speak."

"What do you mean?" asked Wade.

The young man leaned nearer. "Say," said he, "these old companies are all copper-bottomed, and Al. They want a safe thing; and the man who brings 'em in a secure three per cent. is their man. They don't hold with higher flights, eh?"

"If you mean Charlesworths, you're right," said Wade, grinning.

"I don't know but it's a good enough plan," pursued the other, "in a general way. But, there's times when we've no use for safety, and that's where a brilliant man comes in. There's more been done in this world, Captain Wade, by forgetting the rules or ignoring them than by following them like a prayer-book. Copy-book maxims are good enough in copy-books."

"I've forgotten 'em," said Wade easily. "Ned, what time's this dinner?"

"Say, now, don't get in a hurry," said the American. "I don't know but we'll manage things between us in five minutes. But it was necessary for me to preface my proposition with these remarks so as you should see the *bona fides*. Now, we'll toe the scratch. Your billet in the Charlesworth Company isn't likely to continue?"

Wade paused a moment, drank his whisky, and then yielded to his easy good nature.

"To be quite frank with you, my dear sir, it doesn't exist any longer."

"That's all right," said the stranger affably. "Because the sort of man Charlesworths don't want some other fellows might want."

"Eh!" said Wade, his attention arrested.

The American turned and nodded through the doorway, and in response to this signal a man strolled out of the hall, and joined us in a leisurely way. He wore spectacles, had a broad forehead under brown hair, and a bushy moustache, and seemed to be about forty. He stood listening. "My name's Halliday, Vincent Halliday," said the American, "and my friend here is Mr. Davenant; and we're in just this hole that we are looking for a skipper, a good sailor and a free-lance, so to speak. Now, after what we've heard, it struck both of us that you'd suit the case."

He paused. Wade looked from one to the other. His position was difficult, and he knew it. It was unlikely that he would find it easy to obtain a ship after his recent wilful escapade. But who were these unconventional strangers? The new-comer, seeing his hesitation, spoke.

"The point is merely this, Captain Wade," he said in a very measured and meticulously correct voice, "that owing to an accident our boat which is due to leave to-morrow has no captain, and we understand that you are likely to be disengaged."

"That is so," said Wade bluntly; and then: "What is she?"

"You may put her down as a tramp," said the even and almost effeminate voice, which minced words like a dancing master.

"She sails to-morrow?" asked Wade. The American nodded. "Tonnage?"

"A thousand." Wade put out his hand for his glass and drained it, a smile on his face.

"Where do you go?"

I glanced at Halliday's face for the answer, and in doing so my eyes shot through the open doorway into the hall. A little figure, gathered into a wisp, was in a corner of one of the lounges, and my eyes flashed on it a second time, as I recognised it as that of the little Frenchman who wanted to go to New York by the German liner. There was almost an imperceptible pause ere Halliday's reply came.

"I reckon we can fetch Baltimore this trip. But we're not hide-bound pedants."

"What are you?" asked Wade with his customary directness.

"I'm acting for the owners, and I'm part owner," said Halliday.

"Oh, this is a one-ship company, eh?" said Wade. "I see the scheme. Well, it pans out all right mostly, but it's small beer for a Charlesworth commodore." He laughed. "However, if we can fix up terms, I'm with you. It comes in to suit me. That's all."

"To-morrow?" inquired the American.

Wade nodded. "I'm not going hat in hand to Charlesworths. I'm game for to-morrow."

"Good," said Halliday; "then we'll fix up all details this evening, I guess." He glanced at me, who had taken no part whatsoever in this conversation. "Perhaps your friend here would join us in a little dinner. That would get it over nice and easy, and we shouldn't be interfering with your arrangements much."

Wade shot a question at me, and I answered: "It is very good of you."

"Very well, then." The American turned as something brushed his elbow, and he followed it with his eyes, as did Wade and I myself. It was the Frenchman, who slipped between us to the bar.

"A glass of cognac, please," he ordered in correct English, his foreign air clearer than ever. He put out a hand, but this time it was steady. He was not cold any longer. Turning, he favoured the American with a furtive glance.

We had fixed an hour for the dinner, and in the interval I wandered in the town, while Wade went back to his Scarlet Runner. I was in Southampton, as we say, on an off-chance that I might get a berth as engineer, for I had been disengaged for some months. And here was Wade summarily dismissed by one employer and greedily accepted by another all in one half-hour. It had an ironical look, as I considered the situation grimly; but I did not grudge Wade the reward of his bounce, and as for myself, I was in no immediate peril of the workhouse. Still, the sea calls in the ears

even of an engineer, calls above the whirr and smell and heat of the engine-room.

Our Yankee friend arranged an admirable little meal, and hung on our wants with ceremony. He looked young and fair and pale, as might have been a poet with ideals, and his eyes were bright and meaning. At times they were occluded, as if under veils of thought, but at other times they broke out with ecstatic light, and shone and danced. There was, to my fancy, something mesmeric about the face, which might have been that of a mystic, or of a fanatic, or even of a mediæval saint. His manners were gentle, and his voice, though distinctively American, was modulated; and there emerged in him occasionally a distinct sense of the humorous. I could not but like him, though he gave me the strong impression of not revealing himself. Anyway, what odds was it to me, who was there to accept the hospitality of an amicable stranger, and to whom therefore only the superficial mattered?

But there was my mistake, to explain which I must come to the fifth of the company, whom I have not yet mentioned. Davenant, suave and soft-voiced, has made his bow; but a very different sort of fish was Marley, who accompanied his friends to dinner. Marley was loud of voice, rough of manner, and heavily marked with small-pox on a swarthy face. His moustache hung black and low on a rough mouth, and he walked with the assertive gait of a sailor. He stared you out of face with no misgivings and no mercy, but not apparently with any desire to annoy you. It was merely

his inconsiderate habit, and I believe he was often unaware of his action. Well, Marley came into my life in his masterful blunt way a little late in the evening.

He was an excellent hand with the bottle, and carried his liquor well, the only developments visible, or rather audible, from his drinking being a rise in the temperature and quality of his voice. Our American drank sparingly, as he ate.

"I guess if I took more I'd be laid up with a headache to-morrow," he explained.

But he talked as lively as a bacchanalian all the time; as did Wade, whose tongue was always loosened by liquor. Only Davenant sat silent; Davenant and myself up to a point. The business part was concluded early in the evening, and the talk thereafter fell on the sea and seafaring. Here Marley's coarse voice began to dominate the room. He spoke easily, fluently, with absolute assurance, and as raucous as a raven.

"When I was in Panama. . . ." There was something happened when he was in Panama. Something of interest had also happened when he was at Rangoon, and again at Lima. Wherever he had been something had happened, and by this I mean something of a genuine interest. He had collected vicissitudes, had Marley, like postage stamps or picture postcards. To do him justice, he was not often the hero of his narratives, and in many cases did not figure at all; but "A fellow I knew," "A man back of where I was," "chaps" he had heard of, had passed through exciting adventures. I had begun by thinking him a typical

sailor; I ended by doubting. He had seen too adventurous and varied a career to be anything typical, unless it were the typical adventurer. And it was only by accident that I discovered what he really was now, by the accident which diverted the course of my life. For in the midst of a yarn, to which the table was listening interestedly, but Davenant with a covert smile behind his glasses, Marley came to a pause.

"And that reminds me, old chap," he addressed Halliday, lolling elbow on table. "What about Skeggs? You know, he won't do."

Halliday made a gesture towards Mark Wade by his side. "We've got our captain now," he said; "it's his affair."

Marley turned his voice on Wade. "Well, the blighter won't do, old man; upon my soul, he won't. I don't believe he knows a differential gear from a differential calculus, and he boozes."

"What's this?" asked Wade cheerfully.

"Why, a damned engineer we shipped," said Marley. "I was going to take it in hand as first officer, but as you're duly constituted now, it's your affair."

So this was the first officer! A ship with such a first officer, I reckoned, could hardly be an orthodox merchantman. But what Wade said dissipated my reflections for the time.

"Gentlemen, I'm not aboard yet, and I haven't even seen my boat, but Mr. Herapath here is a fully qualified engineer, in whom I have the utmost confidence."

The table turned its eyes on me. "That so?" said

Halliday, scanning me with his questioning eyes. "I reckon what's good enough for the captain is good enough for us," he added, with a smile.

Marley's gaze stared me out of countenance frankly. "That's queer," he said. "You'd better come along."

I put my position modestly in a nut-shell. "Gentlemen, I'm out of a job. If you want me, I'll come."

"That's all right," responded Halliday in his easy voice; "Captain Wade will fix that up."

Upon me were directed the glasses of Davenant, as if he had but now come to the conclusion I was of some interest. I said nothing more; the incident had been unconventional, and was better ignored at that time, and in these circumstances. Marley resumed his stories, and we parted not long afterwards with many professions of amity.

I was indebted to Marley's loud voice for something that sent me to bed in a thoughtful mood. We drifted down the passage from our private room, and the visitors sought the cloakroom. Here it was in the jumble that I overheard a remark passed by the first officer.

"Well, that's a good thing," he said, apparently to Halliday. "Anyway, it freezes up McLeod, and he'll damn well have to be doctor now."

What sort of a boat was this in which such remarks were possible? I could not guess. I was interested. As I came out to my friend Wade the haunting figure of the little Frenchman was dancing in the hall. He was evidently looking for someone, and he had a frown on his brow.

"Do you know," said Wade as we walked off into the darkness of the night. "I thought that little beggar was going to speak to me."

So did I; but I wasn't thinking of him, I was turning over the phrase I had heard: "McLeod, then, would damn well have to be doctor." What could it all mean?

CHAPTER II

THE WRECK IN SOUTHAMPTON WATER

WADE took command of the *Duncannon* early next morning, and I met him by appointment at ten o'clock. The steamer, which was of about a thousand tons, and underengined, as I saw at once, lay in the stream, a stretch off the quay. The wind blew nippingly, and the loud water talked against the masonry. As I was securing a boat I noticed a woman standing on the quay. She had her hand to her hat in that brisk wind, and so I was unable to tell if she were young or guess at her looks; but her figure was tall and slight, and had the appearance of grace at a distance. I just glanced and thought no more; and five minutes later I boarded the *Duncannon*.

I was met by Marley, whose head hung over the taffrail in an easy contemplative manner, and I was hailed genially, as by one who had known me intimately for years.

"Halloa, old man, glad you've come. There's a row royal on about the second mate's place."

"Second mate!" I echoed, amazed at this casual information.

"Yes; but I've washed my hands of it. Wade's got to settle it now. That's what a skipper's for, eh?"

Landed aboard, I faced him. I took him in his own way, frankly.

"Look here, would you mind telling me what you really are, and what this outfit is?"

He stared at me in his usual candid way, and then laughed. "Well, we're just a tramp out for cargo, you know. If you've got goods that want shifting, you can ring us up, and we'll allow back commission." He strolled aft as he spoke, and left me, and I went forward to make inquiries about Wade. I expected to find him the centre of altercations, but instead I found him in conversation with the little Frenchman of the previous night. He nodded at me, and continued.

"No; it can't be done, sir," said he decisively; "we're only a tramp, and no passenger boat. Hang it, man, there's the Hamburg liner due this afternoon."

"Ah, but she goes, Monsieur Captain, to New York. I do not wish to go to New York. I wish to go to Baltimore, where you go. I will pay my passage, and——"

Wade waved him aside impatiently. "I've said it can't be done. I've got no orders. If you can fix it with my owners, all right. But I'm not running passengers on my time-sheet."

"Where," demanded the persistent foreigner, "is the owner?" with his v's and his z's uppermost.

Wade shrugged his shoulders. He had lost patience. "Somewhere ashore," he said carelessly, and walked off.

"Mr. Davenant," said he as he came abreast of me. "Turn that little ragamuffin over the side, will you. He pesters me, and if we're to sail midday——"

"What, midday?" I asked in surprise.

He nodded. "Smart work. This is a real daisy, Ned. I haven't struck an odder outfit since I started on my own. It's great."

"What on earth is it?" I inquired.

"Haven't the least notion," he replied. "Pay's good, and ship's all right. Look here, Ned, I've fired that boozier, and you've got to sign on. I've made it square. Look alive, boy, and get your kit."

I was for a moment staggered. All sorts of reflections crowded upon me, and I was aware that I wanted time. This was amusing enough as an unconventional show, and Mark Wade, reckless adventurer, might consider it great, but I did not quite know if it appealed to me to take a hand in it. However, Wade had already assumed that I would join him, and even as I summoned my resolution to my aid I was aware of the charming bustle aboard that antedates departure, and always sets my heart in a flutter. I had been out of place for six months, and——

"Right, I'm game," said I.

Wade paid no heed. "Rum, that beggar turning up again," he said meditatively. "Seemed to take on a bit that he couldn't come."

I did not think it rum, for I had seen more of the Frenchman, and I was convinced that he had followed

us and eavesdropped. He knew our plans; but, good Lord, what were our plans? It was all an enigma.

I hurried ashore to complete my arrangements, which were not elaborate, and I must have landed a little in the rear of the foreigner. At any rate, I caught him up towards the town, and to my surprise recognised by her dress and carriage his companion for the girl who had stood on the quay. I say girl, because it was obvious now, seen at close quarters, that she was young, and as I overtook and passed them I saw too that she was handsome. I had but a glimpse, for manners forbade me to turn round and stare at her. The man was walking in silent dejection, still wrapped about with mufflers, and invoked in me once more that wave of contemptuous pity I had felt for him.

I got back to the *Duncannon* in a very short time, and went down to the engine-room. I heard Halliday was aboard, but I did not wait for ceremonies. The engine hands I found capable, and my second a faithful fellow who had worked himself by painful application up the ladder. He spoke with a strong northern accent, and his name, it appears, was Collins. Ten minutes later I had completed the formalities necessary to my position, and received, for what they were worth, Mr. Halliday's compliments and thanks.

"I guess you've got us out of a fix, Mr. Herapath," said he, his bright eyes everywhere as he smiled, "and laid me personally under an obligation."

I repudiated this view of it. "Business is business," I said bluffly, "and I wanted a berth."

"That's all right," said the gracious young man. "And we're just going to be a happy family together."

As if to give ironic point to his remark I heard at this juncture Marley's voice roaring on deck, and the exclamations of a sharp quarrel. Then the door of the cabin was burst open and a tall, sandy-haired thin man of five and thirty appeared, red of face and choleric of appearance.

"Look here, Halliday, I'll be damned if I'll be treated this way," he said with a discernible Scottish accent. "It was arranged that I was to be second officer when we made the compact yesterday. I'll see that swine in Hades before I'll let him stand in my shoes."

"Steady," enjoined the American suavely. "Let's get a cinch on this, doctor. I guess we can work a way out of this trouble. No hot air, doctor. It spoils the complexion."

He smiled engagingly; but his soothing manner made no impression on the furious Scotsman, who broke out anew, and consigned the whole ship to perdition. The interruption came from Mark Wade, who entered attracted, no doubt, by the angry din.

"What's this racket, Mr. Halliday?" he asked quickly, taking in such of the situation as emerged.

"Well," said the American uneasily, "there's a little complication here, captain, but we can square it pretty easy. The doctor, here, was kind of promised the second officer's place, and then——"

Wade put up his hand. "That'll do," said he. "I

choose my own officers for this trip, and I've fixed up with Mr. Davenant, who holds, I believe, a master's certificate. What are your qualifications, sir?" The Scotsman looked his menace, but growled out only:

"I've been a yachtsman for years."

"I guess that won't do for me," said Wade. "The point is, we don't want another second officer, and I should say, judging from the temperature of this outfit, we should want a sawbones badly this trip. I want to know a little more, Mr. Halliday, than I do know, and you and I must have a talk together. I don't pretend this is the most orthodox boat I've handled; but orthodox or not, I'm going to handle it while I'm here, and you must make up your minds to that. And now we've come to that, Mr. Halliday, there's too much rum about for my liking. The bilge stinks of it. By the Lord, I'm not going to have rum flow on my boat without knowing why." And he glared at the doctor, who regarded him sullenly, malevolently. The insinuation was obvious, as obvious as its justice. The reek of the spirit was in the cabin.

"Oh, be damned," said the Scotsman, and walked surlily out, leaving us there in silence. Then Wade turned to the American.

"We'll have that quarter of an hour's talk, if you don't mind, Mr. Halliday," he said firmly; and I followed the doctor.

When Wade met me on deck he was in another mood. Preparations for departure were far advanced, and I had seen that the engines were in order.

"By heavens, Ned," said he, "this is better than racing a Cape Coach; it is, by jingo!"

"Do you know what you're doing?" I asked drily. His nose wrinkled in a way he had, and he winked at me.

"I know we're to trim our course for Baltimore," he said, "and I know that some of our owners have taken this fancy to travel along with us. That's all I know, and that's all I want to know. But, owners or not owners, they've got to toe the mark I make, my son."

It was owing to the free and easy methods of this astonishing tramp that we did not get off as had been arranged by midday. The question of stores came up, and it appeared that the man in charge of the store-room had forgotten an important order.

"Damn it," said Marley, "we can't go to sea without provisions. Where the devil's Clifford?"

"He's ashore somewhere. I saw him in the town an hour ago," said another, with a slight Irish brogue and a cheerful face.

"It's a bit too thick," grumbled yet another who was addressed as Digby, and was an elderly shrunken man with a battered face. Ostentatiously he carried a boat-swain's whistle. I glanced at Wade, who was eyeing the group. It was six bells, and we were due to start.

"Where the devil's Digby?" cried Marley.

"Gentlemen, you can start when you like, of course," said Wade quietly, "but when you've made up your minds I'll be obliged if you'll stick to them." He moved away, and joined me.

"What's that boatswain doing there?" I asked in amazement.

"That, my son," said Wade, his face relaxing into a grim smile, "is one of our owners. He's had some experience as a yachtsman, I'm told. And, Lord love you, Ned, our absconding storekeeper's another owner. It's wonderful; it's beautiful; and I shouldn't wonder but there's going to be lively times for me ahead. But I wouldn't miss it, by thunder—I wouldn't miss a bit of it. It beats bridge hollow."

"Who is this, then?" I asked, as the man with the brogue drifted towards us, a grin on his face.

"That, Ned," said Wade, with exemplary gravity, lowering his voice, "is yet another owner, and his name's Byrne, but I fancy he hasn't got a berth settled yet for himself."

Byrne came up with a friendly jest. He was of middle height, middle age, and broad of shoulder, and like so many of that odd company, he bore the signs of an open life, of a free and adventurous career, upon his face.

"It's Grand Marnier that's kept Clifford ashore," he said with his pleasant Irish voice. "He forgot it in London, and swore we'd not go without it. I doubt but there's some bottles somewhere in Southampton."

A purser, or storekeeper, scouring the shops for a liqueur while his steamer snorted impatiently for him in the bay! The picture struck me as so comical that I burst out laughing, and thus earned the smiling scrutiny of Byrne's eyes.

"And a very tippie it is," he continued.

The delinquent came aboard sometime about two, rather a short man, fat and red of face, with coal-black, sparkling eyes and a ready tongue. He stood the chaff and remonstrances of his friends with imperturbable good humour. He cracked back at Byrne.

"Go on, you won't get any, my buck." And to Marley:

"Keep your hair on, chummy. I didn't know your blamed boat was due to sail so soon. We've got to wait for the provender. It's coming along."

"What the devil——" began Marley raucously, but Clifford shut him up.

"Oh, well, you can go without it if you like."

"What did you get, Jacko?" inquired Byrne with interest.

Clifford tapped off the items on his fingers cheerfully. "Twenty cases of 'the boy,' thirty dozen port, a consignment of whisky and rum."

"Good, man!" ejaculated Byrne.

"Rum!" said the boatswain grumblingly. "That's the third lot of rum you ordered. Why didn't you get some decent claret or burgundy?"

"Look here, we'll have this blooming ship a keg of rum," burst in Marley. "I'll be damned if we won't, at this rate. And if I was Halliday, I'd stop it all."

Clifford made an ugly face at him. "Well, cockie, you're not, and Halliday's not dux here either. We've got a new captain, I'm told. Where's he?"

Wade was not there, but communications between Clifford and his friends resulted in his recognising my presence.

"Are you chief greaser?" he said amiably, and obviously with no intention of affront.

"I believe deck-lubbers call it that," I replied in the same vein.

"Ho, here's a wit, man," he declared aloud, and turned about as if to call Byrne. I could see that he had been drinking ashore, but he was only merry. Yet as I looked at his dark red countenance I had an idea that he might be quarrelsome in his cups. His eye was full of energy and glanced mischievously. It was, or seemed to me, a tricky eye.

The only man of that gang of owners who was not in evidence was Davenant, who had been appointed second officer. He went about his duties unostentatiously, and I heard his soft, ladylike voice raised a little now and then with polite orders to the crew. What the crew made of their masters was more than I could tell, but I would have given much to learn. Halliday was not on deck.

We got off at last towards dusk in a light mist which came up the Water and increased as we advanced. And on that several of the owners retired to the saloon to celebrate the event. Davenant stuck to his post, and so did Marley, who growled out his misgivings in my ear.

"'Tisn't the game," he said. "It's not the clean potato. Drink when you drink, and work when you

work. I've lived a number of years and learnt something, old man, and you can take my tip for it that that spells mischief. I don't mind a good beano myself at the right time, but it's not now. How's she go, Mr. Davenant?"

Wade was on the bridge, with what I may assume to be an astonished pilot; and the *Duncannon* was walking slowly out of the Water.

The mist with the dusk in it was all about us, and we went at a very slow pace, the engines at quarter speed. I was below most of the time, and so was not acquainted with what happened on deck. I was aware only of loud voices, and supposed that the "owners" had fallen out among themselves. Perhaps they were fighting over the berth of boatswain. But presently I had a message from above that took me on to the bridge in consultation with the captain. He wanted to know one or two things.

"You say your men are all right," he said; "I wish I could say the same of mine. Anyway, tell me, where's Halliday? He's got to know a thing or two about the boat. Hear that now? It's those swine in the saloon. How are your engines?"

"She's a bone-shaker," I said tersely.

"Thought so. She's been chartered on the cheap, or bought maybe. It's this craze for one-ship companies. But what do you make of them?"

"I'm puzzled," I replied. "I fancy Marley."

"My chief," he said, with a short laugh. "He can

turn his hand to many things, I'll lay, and make shift to do 'em. He's all right up to a point, and he's decent. Hear that again? Davenant knows more about a ship. I shouldn't wonder if he was a sailor. But that doctor man fairly gets on me. I'll have him in irons if he doesn't look out. Mr. Marley," he left off talking to me to thunder down to the deck, "I'll be obliged if you'll have that damned noise stopped. By gad, I'll have 'em all locked up and landed in Plymouth if this goes on."

Marley's voice came back to us from the afterpart of the *Duncannon*, which was rolling in the larger tideway.

"This old gal's about equal to her engines," commented Wade. "She's a porpoise. Ned, better get back to your room. It's safer. Halloa! What the devil's that?"

At that moment there evidently emerged from the saloon the three revellers, who had been drinking good-luck to the voyage in the most inauspicious manner. Halliday had shut himself in his cabin, as I afterwards learned, and was nothing less than sea-sick. The sound of laughter came up to us.

"I'll make 'em laugh on the other side of their mugs before I've done with them," said Wade grimly. "Get along, Ned."

I descended, and ran up against the trio, of whom Byrne was the most jovial. He took my arm, as I would have passed, and offered me a drink.

"We've left a bit over in the saloon, old cock," he said. "A merry heart goes all the way."

I shook myself free. "If I were you, Mr. Byrne," I said, "I would take an off-time."

"Oh, don't talk through your hat," said the store-keeper genially. "We don't start on a cruise like this every day."

"Damn it, you've got my tobacco, Clifford," said McLeod, feeling in his pockets. "This is a damn rotten boat," he added viciously. "I'd like to rub Halliday's nose in it."

"Why, what could you expect when he——" Clifford began, but was silenced by a sharp dig on the elbow from Byrne. "Oh, what's the odds?" said Clifford recklessly. "Silence is golden—so's a heap of other things. I don't take much stock in silence."

"You've been taking too much stock in fizz, Jacko," said the Irishman easily. "Come along with you." He took his arm, and they were moving on, when the siren suddenly shrieked in a wheeze on the darkness.

"Halloa! We're ashore," said Clifford lightly.

"What's up?" said McLeod.

The siren shrieked again. "It's the fog," said Byrne.

I put my head into the engine-room. "Ease her, Collins," I called, and the screw's vibration became individually distinguishable in the throbbing deck. The veil of mist enveloped us, but it was not so thick now, appearing only as a faint gauze on the twilight water. The siren screamed again.

"Back her!" thundered Wade through the tube; and Collins reversed with the jerk of a steel wrist.

There was the slightest sensation of touching some-

thing, a cry, and then an uproar on deck. I ran to the side, and peered over into the dim sea, which was churning below. The old tramp was now almost at a standstill; but drifting fast along her dull iron side, knocking as she did so, was a small sailing boat, yawl-rigged, and of some size. The continued motion of the *Duncannon*, as, in obedience to her momentum, she forged through the water, threw off the yawl, as it were with a kick, and it overturned, hurling the occupants into the sea. Immediately one of our sailors threw a couple of life-buoys overboard, and Marley trailed a line. One figure was visible, clinging to the upturned keel, and the rope reached him. He was drawn aboard, and as well as he could for the water he had swallowed, explained the situation. There was an old man overboard, and——

Marley waited to hear no more, but had sprung overboard forthwith, and there was a rush to the bulwarks to watch. We could just see his head, a patch of darkness, on the water, moving here and there for some time, and then, just as the boat Wade had ordered to be lowered touched the water, he called out.

“Right O!”

The boat shot off towards the sound, and we on deck heard now the noise of commingling voices; and presently the boat returned, bringing Marley and the person he had rescued. So soon as they were aboard, under the light of a lamp, Wade uttered an exclamation.

“The Frenchman, or I’m a Dutchman!”

It was the Frenchman beyond doubt, a very damp,

dishevelled, and disreputable-looking Frenchman, "like a drowned mouse," as Byrne said.

"What on earth were you doing out here in a fog?" demanded Wade with scant ceremony.

The old man extended his dripping arms. "It was an accident. I will explain some time—not, not now," he said pantingly. "We took a boat——"

An idea flashed in my brain. I could not tell you why that picture of the tall slim girl came back to me at that moment. It did.

"We!" I exclaimed quickly. "Was there anyone else—your daughter?"

He looked round, as if searching for someone. "It is my niece," he said vaguely.

"Good God! There's a girl in the water," I cried, and, obeying an impulse which I had not time to question, I jumped into the sea.

I swam in the direction in which I supposed the derelict would be. The sea was not very rough, but it was very cold, which, of course, is the invariable danger to a strong swimmer; but I was very sound of body and arm. It was sometime before I made the wreck, but nothing else was visible, and there was no sign of the girl. I pushed off and quested round in a circle, peering into the dusk, but nothing greeted my eyes, save the tumbling, noisy water. I swam for some time longer, and then when I had come to the conclusion that the worst had happened, and that all hope must be abandoned, I was hailed from the distance.

I answered back, and I recognised a man's voice. I turned towards it, and presently a boat emerged and came to a pause by me.

"Come along in, old man," said Marley's voice. "It's all right."

"Is she safe?" I asked as I clambered into the boat.

"Yes," said Marley. "She got hold of a buoy. God's own luck, wasn't it? The old man found her."

"What, Captain Wade?" I asked in surprise.

"Yes; followed our example, and took a little bathing excursion. She wasn't far behind in the drift of the ship. The tide makes that way."

I made no remark till we reached the *Duncannon*, and not then until, as we went up the side, Clifford greeted me.

"You're a day behind the fair, old cock. What a lot of heroes we've aboard! Damned if I don't feel like a gold medallist of the Royal Humane Society myself!"

"Bravo, greaser!" came from the other side.

I was angry, I was disappointed; perhaps it was petty; and I certainly should have remembered discipline. I turned myself, recognised McLeod, and took him straight between the eyes with my fist. He dropped with an oath, and I passed on to the engine-room through the astonished crowd.

"Half speed," bawled Wade through the tube. Collins put the lever over.

CHAPTER III

THE JOB LOT

I MET Wade on his way to change his wet clothes, and he grinned at me.

"Well, we've made tolerable fools of ourselves," he observed. It was just the little swagger that became him, and I knew he was pleased with himself. He felt, I was certain, important; whereas I only felt silly.

"I don't think it was the captain's place to leave his ship," I remarked jestingly.

"No, nor the chief engineer's either; nor the first officer's, eh? Good Lord!" He threw up his hands and shook the sea water from his arms. "This is a mad cruise, Ned."

"Yes," I assented. "We seem to have got touched also. We've all begun of a piece—a mad crew and a mad cruise."

"Rum thing, that little weasel turning up," said he.

"I don't think so," I rejoined. "He meant to."

"How's that? What are you getting at?" he asked.

"Why, it's pretty plain. He wanted to ship with us. This isn't merely an accident. Coincidences don't turn up that way. He was set on the *Duncannon*."

"Why in the name of Holy Moses does any sane

person want to travel on this old crock?" he demanded.

"More than I can tell; but he did."

"Well, I'll be damned if he will," said Wade; "I'll run him ashore at Plymouth."

He disappeared below, and I turned also to go down, when Clifford came up.

"I say, V.C., there'll be a row on with McLeod," he said in his habitual voice, which seemed to have a chuckle in it. "You gave him a sharp one on the konk, and tapped burgundy."

"Look here, Mr. Clifford," I said, "I'm tired of this ship and company already, and if Dr. McLeod, or anyone for the matter of that, save my official superior, interferes with me, I'll do worse than dirty his face."

I stared him straight in the eyes, but his never lost their implicit smile that was the undercurrent of his face. They were glassy and shining, and expressed nothing I could read.

"This is muscular Christianity," he answered. "Save us, dear boy! *arma virumque cano*. And talking of arms, let's have a feel of yours."

Quite unabashed, he put out a hand and seized my forearm, which I slowly stiffened. I did not resent his action. He was a cad of some kind, yet he quoted Virgil, and sonorously too. I could not guess at him. But I was showing him something now which was worth all the repartees.

"Gosh!" he said. "Nebuchadnezzah! What an arm! I'll trouble you to remember I'm not McLeod;

and as he's a particular friend of mine, I'll hurry up and give him warning. You ought to put up a notice-board, Herapath. Trespassers will be boko'ed. So long!"

He moved off with the waddling gait which was not a sailor's, and I got to my cabin at last. I cared nothing if I had made McLeod my enemy; I only wanted to ensure decent treatment for myself from this remarkable job lot of adventurers. As a matter of fact, I heard and saw nothing of McLeod for some time, but understood that he was attending the girl who had been so opportunely rescued. Though she had clung to the buoy, she was suffering from immersion and the shock, and needed medical advice. It was Wade who told me this later in the evening. Neither he nor I had dined in the saloon along with the others owing to the necessity of being at our posts; but we had food together later, and here I learned the result of Wade's interrogation of the boatman.

"There's not much sense in his head," said the captain, "but I can't make out why he ventured into the Solent in a fog and late like that. He says the old gentleman wouldn't take a denial, wanted to get across to the Isle of Wight—Ryde. But it was a rum way of getting across on a dark, cold evening. Why not have taken the ordinary steamer?"

"He didn't want the Isle of Wight," I said.

Wade eyed me. "You appear to have made up your mind," he observed.

"Doesn't it stand to reason?" I asked. "We find

the man anxious to sail with us; he importunes you for a passage, and is refused. He is referred to the Hamburg line, due to-day. But he doesn't take advantage of that; and we pick him up at the mouth of the Water, lying in our way."

Wade was thoughtful. "Well, we'll interview him presently," he said, resuming his meal.

We interviewed him when we had finished, but discovered quite another man from the person who had begged for a passage. When he entered, and I saw him under the better light, he wore no longer that look of distress which I had noticed before. He was calm, collected, and even showed assurance, as he made us a dignified bow. He had the air of a gentleman, even of one of some distinction, with his high brow, and his long, narrow fingers.

"I thank you, messieurs, for your great courtesy and courage in the rescue of my niece," he said in a gracious way.

"Sit down, sir," said Wade, pointing to a chair. "I hope you're not suffering from the effects of your ducking, and that your niece is recovering. Mr. Herapath and myself are only too pleased if we have been of any assistance to a lady." That was like Wade; he waved aside thanks with the lordly air of one superior to them; and he turned a compliment to a nicety where a woman was concerned. Then the other side of his character emerged. "But what I can't understand, sir, is what you were doing out there in a small yacht on such a night."

"We were crossing to Ryde," said the old gentleman.

He sat upright now, as if prepared for a cross-examination, and he eyed his interrogator firmly. He was sixty, I guessed, and his Gallic beard was white, and he showed above it tense, narrow lips.

"On such a night?" said Wade carelessly.

The old man bowed. "It was imperative I should be in Ryde this evening."

His shaking was doubtless responsible for his slip, of which Wade took immediate advantage.

"I'm sorry we can't put in there for you. You must be content to wait," he said. "But I can promise to land you at Plymouth to-morrow evening." Consternation broke out in the man's face, and he almost rose from his chair.

"Pardon," he said, relapsing into French in his emotion. "I do not desire now to go to Ryde. It is too late; the opportunity is past." And then recurring to English, but broken English: "I 'ave miss ze chance by zis time. It is no good."

Wade considered, fingering a pen. "I'm sorry," he said. "But you are aware the accident was not our fault?"

"Oh no, no," he ventured to exclaim eagerly. "You were not responsible. It was my fault entirely—I take the blame. I absolve you."

"That's all right," said Wade calmly. "Then we'll part to-morrow morning good enough friends, eh, and with no grudges?"

The Frenchman had opened his mouth to speak, but

by an effort controlled himself. A slight pallor crept into his face, and when he did speak he was evidently agitated.

"I will be frank with you, sir," he said. "As I have missed my appointment in Ryde to-night, it is no use to me to go back. Therefore I shall proceed at once to America." He glanced about the cabin with ill-suppressed excitement. "This is a nice vessel, and I will propose to you that I continue with you to Baltimore, did I not hear?"

"That is impossible," said Wade. "We have no room for passengers."

"But I will be content with any accommodation," pleaded the old man. "I am not difficult. I am an old traveller."

"There is your niece," said Wade.

"She too is accustomed to—what you say—rough it," he urged. "She is a good girl, and would enjoy the voyage—the experience."

"It can't be done, monsieur," said Wade relentlessly. He could be bluff as any old-time salt, hard as any marline-spike, when he wished.

The Frenchman rose now from his seat, and his comfortable assurance had fallen away from him; once more his hands trembled, and once more I experienced that vague sentiment of pity. But it did not enter Wade's heart.

"Monsieur," he pleaded, "my name is Carvaulx, Jean Carvaulx, and I am a banker in Paris, Marseilles, elsewhere. Monsieur has heard the name? It is well

known." He paused anxiously, but Wade made no sign. "I will pay willingly for this service. You will call it what you say—a rich man's freak, fancy, eh?"

Again he paused anxiously, and this time Wade answered. "This ship is what is known as a tramp, and we cannot carry passengers."

Carvaulx's face in a sudden was haggard and worn. He glanced wearily at me. "There was another gentleman——" he began falteringly, when the cabin door opened, and Halliday entered, lank and dishevelled, and sickly of aspect.

"I hear you've had an accident, captain," he said with an evident assumption of cheerfulness. "I'm glad it was no worse. I presume this is the gentleman whom we had the misfortune to upset."

He turned to M. Carvaulx, who was regarding him with a change of face.

"It was all our fault," said the Frenchman, with a bow.

"Well, I'm sorry anyway," said Halliday, "and we'll put you ashore as soon as ever we can, and——"

"Pardon," said the old man, as he had said it to Wade. "I ask for a passage, for which I pay."

Halliday hesitated. "We ain't a passenger boat," he said.

"Pardon. I understand everything. It is my whim, mine and my niece's. I will pay the passage fare—what you will." He spoke in an indifferent, lordly manner.

"Well, I guess this is a little unexpected compliment

to the *Duncannon*, eh, captain?" said Halliday, with a laugh.

"Monsieur," pursued the Frenchman, following up his advantage, "if monsieur would allow us to discuss this matter in private, monsieur and I might arrange terms."

"Well, we can try anyway," said Halliday, smiling.

When they were gone Wade turned to me. "This looks like a deal, Ned. Our American friend has greedy eyes. Well, it's their affair. I can't promise them a prosperous voyage, but I think I can a lively one."

"We're all mad," I said; "you and I are affected."

He rose. "It's a lark," he said indifferently. "Feel that? It shivers my timbers every time she gets her nose ever so little down. I suppose I'd better see how the young lady is progressing."

I followed him, and we descended into the saloon, off which the cabins opened. In one of these the girl had been installed. McLeod emerged as we reached the door. His brows drew down at the sight of me.

"Miss Sylvester is going on nicely, but she's had a shock," he said. "On my advice she will not get up to-night."

Wade nodded, and turned, and as the doctor passed me he said something in an undertone.

"I'll have it out with you yet, by God."

"Don't you think we're square now?" I returned pacifically.

He swore fiercely. "No," he said.

I shrugged my shoulders. "Very well," I said, and left him. The Frenchman came tumbling down the companion as I went up, alert and cheerful, and I knew he had got his way even before I met Halliday on deck.

"Mr. Herapath," said he in his quick manner, "that gentleman's staying. We can't afford to lose good money."

"Isn't it a bit odd?" I replied.

"I don't take much stock in the usual," he answered. "His dollars are good enough for me; I've no use for him any other way. Seems a bright-headed sort of chap."

"He's clever," I assented. "There's his dome to let you know it."

"Say, Mr. Herapath," he went on, lowering his voice, "there's bad blood, they tell me, between you and the doctor. He's a tough, is the doctor, and I don't exactly ask you to lie down and be eaten, but if you could manage to pull together for a while, why I'd take it kindly, and it would be nice all round."

He put it politely, and I liked him for it. I don't believe he had any temper to lose himself; he had a clear, calculating eye, and his only emotion was a fine frenzy of enthusiasm over an idea.

"I will do my best," I told him, "but the circumstances are unusual. You know better than I do, Mr. Halliday, that this is a queer trip."

His glance sharply questioned me, but I do not suppose he saw much in my expression.

"I guess I know what you mean," he said. "The owners are a mixed lot. So they are; but they have shares. And they had this fancy to take the voyage. I thank you for your promise; and now, as I'm not feeling anyways well, I'll just lie down." He departed, as ill a man as I had seen, for the sea had grown choppy. I verily believe that it was game of him to emerge in the crisis. He knew his associates, and was aware that responsibility rested on him. Halliday was grit all through when it came to his spirit. It was his physique that was against him.

By ten o'clock next morning we were off Plymouth, for the engines were banging her along, and Wade was on the bridge when I came on deck for some air. He beckoned me to join him, and I did so.

"I say, Ned," he broke out, without greeting, "she's a stunner."

"The *Duncannon*?" said I drily.

"Be damned," said he. "Our young guest there, Miss Sylvester. She's a regular clinker. I saw her this morning, when she insisted on thanking me prettily for hauling her out of the water. I don't know but I'm glad Halliday's taken the old josser along."

"We are a mixed lot," said I.

"That's life," he returned. "What's the odds? Ned, keep an eye on that doctor. He's a gorilla. He savages. I believe he's fey."

"Oh no, he's not," I answered. "He's only a Scottish barbarian. I'll comb his hair if he needs it."

"It's a pity you had that row," he said thoughtfully.

"It's only part of the fun, isn't it?" I said significantly; and he laughed.

"Oh, I don't mind," he replied as he looked towards the land. "We've got to drop that ancient mariner."

"But the ancient bird we keep," I said.

"And the niece," he added to that.

He dropped the mariner and the pilot in safety inside the breakwater, while Monsieur Carvaulx looked on with shining eyes. It was as if he were congratulating himself on his good fortune in not being landed. And as he leaned over the rail and watched, a figure stole to his side and looked landward also. I recognised her at once as the girl I had seen on the quay. She gave me one glance of meditative inquiry, and then addressed her uncle in French. For some time they remained chatting in good spirits, and once or twice a dry cackle sounded mirthlessly in the old man's throat. He was distinctive in appearance, but he was not prepossessing. On the other hand, Miss Sylvester (as her name appeared to be) fully justified Wade's encomium. She was of a youthful slighthness, but her slim body denoted vigour and energy, and her face was vivid and sparkling with interest. Her cheeks were flying a little colour, and the soft bronze of her hair took the fire of the morning sun. The screw began to churn in the water, the *Duncannon* turned her nose, and the Frenchman uttered a sigh—almost as it seemed of contentment. His eyes were directed shoreward still, as if he watched for someone who never came, and watched with growing relief.

I had transferred my attention from the niece to the

uncle for the moment, though she was the prettier picture, but now I noticed that she was joined by McLeod, tall, sandy of head, and offhand of manner. He was in an amiable, jocund mood, quite different from the raging Scot I had seen on a previous occasion. He talked freely, and laughed loudly, and I could see that he was doing his best with the lady. Presently they began to promenade the deck together, and she presented a beaming bright face to me as she came aft, talking merrily with her companion. I shrugged my shoulders, and looked over the taffrail at the receding hills and breakwater, and fell into a little mood of reflection. From this I was awakened by a voice, and found Miss Sylvester addressing me. McLeod stood some distance aft, with darkling brows.

"Mr. Herapath, isn't it?" she said prettily, holding out her hand. "I have only just learned your identity. The captain told me of your brave conduct in jumping overboard to save me. Believe me, Mr. Herapath, I am deeply indebted to you, and I thank you from my heart."

It was phrased almost formally, but there was no mistake as to the cordiality of her tone. She spoke with great confidence, and also with earnestness. She was complete mistress of herself for so young a girl—for I judged her to be no more than twenty; and I thought I detected something un-English not only in her manner, but in her voice. And it was not quite explained by her French uncle. I took her hand and murmured my reply. She had done it prettily, and I

believe, as I say, that she meant it; but I think any woman in those unusual circumstances of excitement and interest would have seemed and been in earnest.

I only smiled, and apologised for not having found her. "It was the only excuse for my absurd act," I said, "and it failed."

"Oh, you mustn't say that, Mr. Herapath," she said, in a high, light voice, opening a pretty mouth and showing the even whiteness of her small teeth. "You must let me think I was worth trying to save. Leave me in the delusion, anyway."

The deprecation was daintily attractive, and here I guessed at her. She was American. I felt sure of it as I examined her with a little closer interest.

"Ah, it was of myself I was thinking," I said, smiling. "It was absurd because unnecessary. The boat would have rescued you."

"You couldn't tell," she said, and then glanced at the fading land. "I would have given much to have landed in Plymouth for an hour, but uncle wouldn't hear of it," she said with regret in her voice.

"You would like to see it?" I inquired.

She shook her head. "No, I have been there before; but, Mr. Herapath," and she gave me a charming smile, again deprecatory, "I wanted to shop. I could have put in quite a long time shopping. Do you realise, Mr. Herapath," she pursued, laughing, "that I have no clothes?" She fingered her handsome gown, which, I supposed, had been dried for her use overnight. I

stared towards the old man, who was still looking landward, and I wondered.

"Well, I don't suppose it will take us more than a fortnight to get to Baltimore," I said, with an awkward attempt at consolation.

"A fortnight!" she echoed, and held up her hands in horror. "Uncle said a week."

I shook my head. "We're no greyhound," I observed, "only a common limping tramp, and with neither fare nor equipments for young and fashionable ladies. But we're going to do our best."

"And I'm not going to make it hard for you," returned Miss Sylvester, smiling. "Just you go on in your own ways, and I'll suit myself to the ship. I'm sorry uncle's business put him in all this haste. I don't understand business," she added demurely.

It sounded like "pumping" her, but I could not help saying: "He might have reached New York more easily by the German boat, and so got to Baltimore before we shall."

"My uncle," said she doubtfully, "would never go by a crowded boat. He hates crowds. It would have made him ill. He has been overworking, and has caused me a lot of anxiety. But he is better already." She followed my eyes to the Frenchman. "He has been much more like himself since he has been on board."

Certainly he had a more cheerful air; for at this moment he went down the deck briskly, and engaged McLeod, who was still waiting, in conversation. My companion, I was pleased to see, had obviously forgotten

all about the doctor. She made no movement to get away, and I made some remark which drew her out. M. Carvaulx, I discovered, was a well-known banker, who had married her mother's sister, and she had gone to live with her aunt and uncle after the death of her own parents in New York. That was ten years before, and her aunt had been dead some three years. Since then she had lived with her uncle and kept house for him.

"He is a great politician," she explained to me rather proudly. "All the great leaders come to his house, and artists and literary men too. It is very interesting. I hope he will soon get better, and then when we get back to Paris we shall see all our old friends. But I'm glad I'm going to America again. I'll have a lovely time seeing all the old places and all my old school friends. I've not been back since I was a little girl."

She babbled on frankly, and without the slightest self-consciousness, and I was enabled to conjecture that with all her assurance she was but a child; indeed, that her very assurance sprang from her unself-consciousness and ingenuousness.

I had enjoyed our chat very much, but here it was abruptly interrupted. McLeod, having shaken off the Frenchman, bore down on us. To me he paid not the slightest attention, and addressed himself to my companion.

"Miss Sylvester, it's time for your tonic," he said with a proprietorial air that rasped my nerves.

"Why, I'd forgotten," she said in a lively way. "I

don't feel much like tonics, doctor. This air's as good as any medicine."

"Pardon me," he said ceremoniously. "I think it is necessary. Will you allow me?"

He withdrew her towards the saloon companion, and I liked to fancy that she went with reluctance.

"Tonic!" said a voice in my ear, a voice that clipped each word with almost vicious decision. "Tonic's the notion. Cæsar's ghost, I'll have some tonic myself. What do you say, V.C.?"

It could only be Clifford, whose black-red grinning face met me as I turned.

"*Vestigia nulla retrorsum!* We're off, Herapath, I guess we're off, and we'll drink a bumper to good-luck. Luck's everything. There's no God but Chance—Chance and the rhino, otherwise the oof. Luck and pluck will carry everything. Come along."

I was inclined to refuse, but I have a certain sense of prudence that comes to my aid in restraint of impulse. If I had knocked McLeod down, I might make amends towards this remarkable rascal. I could not place him. Every feature of his face spoke to a loose liver; he had the relics at least of a classical knowledge, and a sense of language. He was both glib and deft of tongue; and he appeared to be good-natured.

"It's rather early," I answered, "but I don't mind."

"I've a mouth like a raw potato, and a tongue like a button-stick," he quoted as he shamled along the deck. "I'm the gentleman with the keys, like Peter. What's your poison? Look here, we'll have fizz."

He seized a bottle of champagne, drew the cork, and filled two tumblers.

"A prosperous voyage!" I said, raising my glass.

"Here's how," he retorted, "and to Eldorado!" His eyes twinkled at me over the glass, which he emptied at a draught.

"At it again, my boy," called a cheerful Irish voice outside, and Byrne entered on the top of that. He was given a glass, and sat down on a barrel to drink it comfortably. Also presently there was drawn into our company Digby, my stage boatswain, with his proud but weary countenance. It was he who ventured a criticism of the wine, and arguments were bandied about.

"Have a drink, monsieur," called out Clifford in the thick of the disagreement.

The face of the Freuchman was visible, passing along the passage. He hesitated.

"I thank you," he said; "just a little glass for good fortune."

"Fill 'moosoo one, Byrne," said Clifford lazily. "Here's to good old Luck." He emptied his third glass, and winked at me.

"A very successful voyage," said Monsieur Carvaulx cautiously, raising his glass. "May we sail prosperously into Baltimore."

"Baltimore!" Clifford bubbled out in a lower voice. "Does the damfool still think he's going to Baltimore?" Byrne jogged him hard in the ribs.

"Steady," he said, "I'm not a professional pug, like Herapath. What's the odds?" He laughed vacantly.

I passed out to go to my engine-room, for it was obvious that they would still sit and drink; and after all I had learned as much as I wanted to know just then, certainly as much as I was likely to learn after that warning jog. We were not bound for Baltimore. Then what the mischief was our destination, and what were we, anyway, as Halliday might have said? I cannot say that Wade supplied the answer to my riddle; he merely confirmed my discovery. When I met him on deck his face wore a curious smile. His eyes encountered mine, and he laughed outright.

"Ned," he said, "the cream of the joke's come. What do you guess? I've just received sealed orders."

"Sealed orders!" I echoed in amazement.

"Yes; from Halliday. I'm to open them next Wednesday. What do you make of that?"

"I've just discovered that we don't go to Baltimore. Clifford's let it out. What are you going to do?"

We stood musing, an unbroken envelope between his fingers.

"Do?" he said at last. "Nothing. Everything. Anything you please. Great Scott, this beats ocean racing by chalks!"

CHAPTER IV

THE THIRD DAY OUT

HALLIDAY made his appearance next morning, recovered from his sickness, but very pallid and shaky. He distributed politeness, however, like largesse, and seemed nervously anxious to be all things to all men. He was certainly not at home on board ship, and his stomach rose in revolt against the situation. His sprightly mind, however, struggled undaunted against all the embarrassments and disabilities of his body. He had presented Wade with sealed orders, and had come out of the seclusion and protection of his cabin to "face the music."

"You understand, captain, exactly what I mean to convey by that packet?" he asked anxiously, but firmly.

Wade turned it over. "I'm to open this three days from now," he said. Halliday nodded. "And, having been led to believe our destination was Baltimore, I shall here find another port indicated?" he continued.

"The advantage of sealed orders, captain," said the American, "is that they talk, not me, and they talk at the right time?"

"Of course, you know I can put her about and go back?" said Wade slowly.

Halliday's long, thin fingers worked nervously. "It

would be within your legal rights," he said. "But I guess you won't."

"You're right, I won't," said Wade, with a laugh. "I see you wanted the sort of man you took me for."

"Precisely, captain," said Halliday; "and I put it to my credit that I took you for the sort of man you are. You've got to take risks all the way in life, and a man who don't jump sometimes without looking the other side of the hedge is not going far. No, you fit us to a 't,' and I'm very well satisfied. I hope you are, captain?"

"I should be all the better satisfied," said Wade in another voice, "if there wasn't so much drinking about. See here, Mr. Halliday, there's some of these people I can't interfere with—these owners of mine," he said, with a sneer. "There's Mr. Byrne, and—well, I don't know if Mr. McLeod is or is not ship's doctor, but I assume Mr. Clifford's the storekeeper and under my orders. And I want it clearly understood that I won't have my men drunk or drinking."

"How so, captain?" asked Halliday anxiously.

"Why, last night there was a merry party in Mr. Byrne's cabin, and some of the stuff has got among the sailors—how, I don't know. But I'm not going to have it. Grog has wrecked many a better ship than this; and I'm not going to have the grog tap on."

"You're right, captain," said Halliday. "You're right all the time."

"In that case, what I propose is this," pursued Wade. "I don't like the look of my owner, Mr. Clif-

ford, and I'll trouble him for the key of the wine cellar. That shall remain in your charge, as I signed on to you, and it is to you I look for orders. You're responsible then, and I can come to you. How's that?"

"A good idea," said Halliday approvingly. "I'll speak to Clifford, and take the key myself."

This, I discovered, was done, much to the dudgeon of the storekeeper, whose sharp tongue I overheard. He had realised it was through Wade's action that he had been deprived of his opportunities, and he came as near being insubordinate as ever man that was not clapped in irons. Byrne was a good deal in his company all that day, and I think it was through Byrne's influence that he did not actually break out into an open act of hostility to the captain. But, oddly enough, he was himself again by night, and, with the contents of a bottle of whisky conceded by Halliday, was the centre of his little party as usual. McLeod was of this gang, and Digby at times, but never Davenant, and Marley but seldom. Now that he was at sea and at work the last was very business-like. He was still free and easy, and he had little idea of discipline, but he took a thorough interest in his duties, and made a very capable first officer. Davenant was little in evidence, as navigating officer was a good deal in the chartroom, and otherwise held himself aloof. He was of a different class, I guessed, from his fellows, at least of a different training and association. He had almost the air of a schoolmaster, or a professor, and his dress was as immaculate as his voice.

The crew was decent enough, but was well sprinkled with foreigners, as one could perceive with an eye. There were only two of them whom I noticed much at this time, and that for a particular reason to which I will come. One was the steward, Heaven, a heavy-moving fellow with a face like pink wax, and glassy eyes.

"The chap's been dead a fortnight," said Marley of him. "Gosh! What a face!"

"A deuced fine simulacrum!" laughed Clifford, and seemed to find him attractive as such. For this it was drew my attention more immediately. Clifford cultivated the steward, hung about him in a friendly way, and was soon exchanging sallies with him in corners. Clifford had no conception of maintaining his own dignity; he had none. He would hobnob with a chimney-sweep. He hobnobbed with Heaven. And once more he began to roll about the passage ways, plying his fluent tongue, and discharging his caustic vulgarisms. He was once more supplied with liquor, and I ought to have guessed its source. But I did not then, and it was only later that I discovered that the steward had a secret store. Byrne and Clifford would repair to his cabin, and share the private stock of his pantry, free from interference, indeed free from the knowledge of the captain; and McLeod was in the habit of joining them. But he was in a better frame just then, delighting to dance attendance on Miss Sylvester under the specious excuse that she needed medical supervision. As a matter of fact, she had completely recovered, and

was just a very healthy and happy young girl, with no troubles on her mind, and nothing on her conscience. Her gaze was wayward; her will was wanton. She liked exercising her splendid fascinations, or at least I thought so. McLeod's devotion pleased her, lank and ugly as he was; but I cannot say that she favoured him more than any other of us. She was like a child, delighting in her own beauty, almost without consciousness of it. It was instinctive.

The other man, to whom I have alluded, was a tall, unseemly fellow, with bold eyes that looked insult at you, and with an indifferent, rough voice. He did his work well, but his insolent carriage was an offence, which made me wonder why Heaven had taken him into his favour. The two were frequently together forward; the "simulacrum" with his uncanny suggestion of disease and decay singularly contrasted with the lean, bold mark of interrogation that was Crashaw.

But the steward's store was not the widow's cruse, and that fact brought about the first crisis of our voyage. Halliday had by now gained his sea-legs, and recaptured his assurance. He was never in doubt of himself now, and dealt his favours all round liberally, paying specially courteous attentions to Miss Sylvester, whom he claimed as a compatriot. He had not the air of a suitor, but rather of an obedient henchman, as if in her he did honour to the American woman.

"I guess we raise a fine creature out there," he told me as we conversed on deck. He had just left Miss

Sylvester, who had joined her uncle in a promenade, and he was following her with his eyes. "There's beauty enough knocking about these old islands of yours, Mr. Herapath, but for style I'll back the United States. Not but what a European residence rubs up a bit of extra polish," he added meditatively.

Then he turned to the sea. "Say, we're getting on pretty well," he remarked complacently. "We're getting on like a happy family, eh?"

As he spoke there was a noise behind us, and we turned about, to see McLeod and Clifford emerging tumultuously from the companion ladder. They came out on deck in a sort of scuffle, laughing uproariously.

"Yes; a happy family," I said drily.

Halliday saw my meaning. "Well, they don't get much now," he observed, puckering his brows.

I had begun to suspect the steward by this time, and so I remarked:

"Not from the ship's cellars."

He looked at me quickly with his alert eyes. "Do you think they get it somewhere else?"

"Look at them," said I; and he looked. Clifford was making an ineffectual attempt to bash in McLeod's hat—ineffectual because of his short stature. "If they go on," I added, "they'll have the captain down on them."

"I'll look into this," said Halliday promptly, and wandered off towards the men.

I feared he would get worsted in any encounter with two such "toughs," but I wished him luck. He joined

them, received a facetious dig in the ribs from Clifford, and began to talk. A few minutes later he had taken them round the deckhouse, and I lost sight of them. I was left wondering if he had succeeded in taming those undisciplined animals. Then I went down to my engines.

I did not come on deck again till it was dusk. A cold wind came off the sea, which was still and dark, and I buttoned my coat closer. It was a change from the warmth of the engine-room. In the half light I perceived Miss Sylvester walking to and fro, and when she came near to me she laughingly explained that she was taking a constitutional. I saw no one else on deck at this time. The evening dropped on us quickly, and a hand climbed up from the lower deck with lights. As he did so I heard voices away aft, and suddenly a cry of alarm.

It was a woman's voice, and, of course, Miss Sylvester's.

I ran back as it was repeated, and when I came up with the dark figures I could discern, her voice rang with anger and indignation and dismay all in one.

"How dared you? Oh, you——"

I took in the scene, and putting my arm about the man's waist, tore him away from her and threw him against the deckhouse with a bang. Then I turned my attention to the girl. She was frightened and she was furious.

"How dared he—the brute!" she panted.

He had had his arm about her, but I did not know

how far his outrage had gone. He lay still where I had thrown him.

"How dared he—the wretched—— Oh, I wish he were dead!" she cried, the tears of mortification and shame in her eyes. She stamped her foot.

I apologised. "The beast was in liquor," I told her. "He didn't know what he was doing."

I led her away, soothed her rumpled feelings, poor child, and finally she descended to her cabin, forgetting to thank me. Her agitation was the revolt of the maiden against the coarse contact of sex.

I went back aft, and found Clifford sitting up.

"Well, I'll be damned!" he said sillily, and felt his head. He stared at me. "Was that you?" he asked.

"A small instalment," I said shortly.

He put out a hand, and steadying himself by the deckhouse, got to his feet.

"I'll take a bill at sight of it, please," he said, and laughed uneasily. "Great Cæsar! I thought it was the Day of Judgment."

"This ship is too small for your talents, Mr. Clifford," I said. "If I were you I should quit at Baltimore, or wherever it is we are bound for. If I might suggest a better career than storekeeper for you, I would say *lion comique*. The music-hall stage is your proper platform."

"Strike me, I leave the field," said he. "I'm not starting. Left at the post, my warrior. Avast! Belay! Ship ahoy! Where's that damned doctor? Lord, I've got a head. I forgot your sledgehammers."

He staggered off towards the hatchway, with his incredible cheerfulness and indifference, and I stood considering him. He was an unpleasant cad with all the vices, but his insuperable amiability surely redeemed him a little. I could not feel as angry with him as I should have felt with McLeod. And the man was drunk. My thoughts went to Halliday and his hopeless task. He had evidently had no success. I descended into the saloon, and there were Byrne, McLeod, and Digby listening to a blasphemous and lurid account of my onslaught.

"Only one damned kiss! What a condemned lot of fuss over a kiss! It's not blame well worth it. I don't buy kisses at that price, my masters. McLeod, where the hell's that sticking plaster?"

"Serve you blank well right," growled the angry Scot. "A little cad like you insulting a lady!"

"Steady on, Mac, or I'll put the V.C. on to you," threatened the unabashed Clifford. "Keep your hair on, and get me something to keep mine on. Here, Heaven, where the Heaven's that whisky? Now, fetch out the fizz, Byrne, like a good chap."

I heard no more, for I turned out of the saloon, unobserved by them, but I had heard enough to know that the resources of their cellar were not exhausted, and I wondered. I had not been more than five minutes in my cabin when there was a rap, and Wade's face was poked through the door.

"What's all this I hear about Clifford's insulting Miss Sylvester?" he asked bluntly.

"He was drunk," said I, going on with the adjustment of my tie.

"Drunk!" he echoed. "Damn it, I thought we'd stopped all that." He paused. "So you came the knight-errant, Ned, eh?"

"I had to get even with you, you see," I said lightly.

A smile shadowed his eyes. "All right. Well, we don't want any more gallant deeds aboard; at least, I hope not. I'm getting sick of that gang."

"They've got a private supply somewhere," I told him.

"I must see Halliday again," he remarked after a pause. "Come up now. Here's a young lady looking for you to thank you for your kind offices."

So that was how he knew. I followed him on deck, and he jocularly presented me. "Here's the hero, Miss Sylvester, with all his blushing honours thick upon him."

I wished him in—well, in the hold.

She put her hand on my arm. "Mr. Herapath, it's just wonderful of you, and I can't say anything more than that. I can't forgive myself for running off without thanking you." Her hand trembled on my arm, and it was plain she had not got over her agitation.

"I'm glad I was at hand," I said. "And I'm glad it was my privilege to crack the blackbeetle, not Captain Wade's."

He uttered a little laugh. "So am I," she said with something like her characteristic gamesomeness; "and as for what you call the blackbeetle——"

"I'll clap him in irons," said Wade sharply. "I won't have vermin like that loose, tramp or no tramp."

"Is that you, captain?" called a voice through the darkness.

Halliday came up. "I want to see you, captain," he said, with evident excitement. "Come along now. Mr. Herapath's a friend of yours, isn't he? Yes, I guess he's all right. I'd like both of you. Oh, good-evening, Miss Sylvester. It's a right down fine evening, isn't it, and there's a good moon on the way up."

He spoke hurriedly, and his address to her was obviously most perfunctory. He was anxious to get us away. Two minutes later we were in the deck cabin which he used as an office. He waved to some seats with what remained of his ceremoniousness.

"Sit right down. Now, I've got to tell you something rather curious," he went on quickly—"something I daresay that you'll say you ought to have known before. Well, you can blame me for that if you like. I've got to tell it now. I made up my mind right away." He fidgeted with the papers on the table, and was displaying every sign of mental disturbance, but his eyes were bright and eager, as if his spirit still dominated proudly a tottering house. "You've got to know, captain, and I guess Mr. Herapath here might as well know too. I don't know anything about the others. I ain't sure anything about them. Anyway, they know enough to go on with, and you don't. I'm figuring out it isn't fair to you." He glanced at us questioningly, and resumed.

"You got an envelope there, captain, and there's something inside it."

"Sealed orders," said Wade shortly. "To be opened latitude——"

"Well, I guess we won't bother about that, and after what I say, you needn't open it at all. Say, what do you suppose this ship's after?"

"I understood from the principal owner," said Wade, drily, "that she was a tramp laden for Baltimore."

"Oh, Twenty-three!" said Halliday, with a small laugh. "Let's quit that, captain. After getting that sealed packet I reckon you know better." Wade said nothing, and his expression betrayed nothing of the interest which he must have felt. "This boat's chartered on a treasure hunt," said Halliday.

I started. Wade stroked his moustache, and waited, as if he had heard the most usual thing in the world. Halliday seemed disappointed. He had expected a "sensation," and it had not come. I think he liked his dramatic curtains; but he continued quickly.

"It's a long story that belongs right here, but I can keep it warm for another time. Anyway, you've got to fix on to these points. There's treasure in an island West Indies way, which has been there for two hundred years, and there's a map which came into my possession—that's my story, that'll keep—and there's the *Duncannon* chartered for a cruise."

"And the owners?" asked Wade laconically.

"That's where my new story begins," said Halliday, frowning. "And that's why I come to you. Buried

treasure requires big handling, captain, and I'm not in a big way myself—not yet, that is. I came upon the map while on your side, while I was canvassing for one of our insurance companies. But this beats canvassing. It's a dead cert, sir!" He struck the table sharply to emphasise his conviction. "But, anyway, I couldn't run to it as a lone hand," he continued with a certain sadness, "and I figured out that I could make a joint-stock company of it, or a simple partnership. Blamed if I don't wish I'd floated it right on to the public," he said. "But there was a lot against it—publicity and the write-me-downs in the financial papers, and so on. And then there was the chance that the scheme would be flooded out with laughter. Anyway, after totting it up, I settled on a partnership," he paused, "and advertised."

"Hence this galley," said Wade.

"Precisely; as you remark, captain. Hence this galley. They're a mixed crew, assorted to taste, but that taste's not mine. I could have picked a better lot, east side of New York, in half a day. When you buy a bag I reckon you must expect to find something in it that don't square with your taste. It'll run up against you. And that's my case. It's run up against me, and that makes me look a fool and feel a fool, and I'm blamed if I don't think it makes me be a fool."

Wade crossed his legs. "If you would get on, Mr. Halliday," he said. "I assume you want assistance or advice in something."

"I don't know," he said, musing. "I believe I'm

merely relieving my feelings, and my conscience, maybe," he added.

"I'm pouring this into your ears by way of belated compensation. No; fact is, you've got to know it now. But I don't know, anyway, that I can't squeeze out for myself. That advertisement brought me hundreds of offers. I had some dollars myself, and I asked for six partners to put up each five thousand dollars. That gave us our charter. And I drew up a deed of sharing profits, by which we shared alike on the score of our money invested, but I came in on top with the map. Say, now, it was like this. There were twelve shares, and each man took one share, and left me five over—five-twelfths for the purchase price of the scheme, see?"

Wade nodded. "You get half," he said laconically.

Halliday's eyes glowed as he rehearsed the financial arrangements, as I had no doubt they had glowed as he propounded them to his partners. "Well, I fixed it up with the six along there, selecting some by reason of their knowledge of the sea. There's Marley, for instance; a good sailor, eh, captain?"

"Decent," said Wade.

"Then there's Davenant," he added hopefully.

"Tolerable," said Wade.

I thought Halliday was somewhat crestfallen at this damping reception, but he rattled on.

"But I chose some for other properties, same as I chose you, captain. I don't want in this business a conventional hymn-singing, top-hat, frock-coat fellow."

"Well, you haven't got him, so far as my acquaintance goes," I interjected, with a laugh.

He eyed me. "No; that's so," he said thoughtfully. "I guess I overstepped the limit, and have to stand the racket. I guess I ought to have sifted 'em better. But I'm blessed if I know now where I am," he ended sadly.

"I wish we knew exactly where we were, Mr. Halliday," said Wade in his blunt way.

"I promise you shall," he smiled back. "The key of the cellar's gone from my bureau."

"That explains it," I said.

Wade whistled.

Halliday watched us, not averse from a certain satisfaction in the dramatic surprise. "And the map," he added.

"The map!" said Wade.

Halliday nodded. "Little Willie's lost the map," he said, "and one of his partners has got it."

"This," said Wade, stirring—"this begins to get interesting."

CHAPTER V

HUNT-THE-SLIPPER

"THE existence of the map was known to all?" asked Wade.

"The map was shown to all," said Halliday. "It was in evidence to prove the *bona fides* of the scheme. But it never left my possession—not till now. All co-partners are privy to the history of the map, but I was the only one in possession of it—till now," he added again.

"The question is—which? Your half share was presumably the temptation," said Wade.

"I'll lay a dollar to a cent I know who has the key," I said, "and it would be making two bites at a cherry to look elsewhere."

"Meaning Clifford?" said Wade, looking at me thoughtfully. "Yes; I nose Clifford in this somehow. It doesn't appear to me insoluble."

"Well, I don't know," said this American slowly. "It isn't quite so simple maybe as it seems. There's six of them, and we've got to settle between 'em. Personally, I don't feel like hitching the job on to anyone in particular. I don't fancy sorting out their claims. At the same time, I'm not saying that Clifford won't pouch his share of the liquor."

"He's already been pouching it," said I. "When did you discover your loss?"

"About half-an-hour ago, when I was opening my bureau. I kept the map in a locked drawer, and the bureau was locked on the top of that. But that didn't seem to worry the thief any."

He indicated the bureau lock which had been ruthlessly shattered.

"When did you notice it was last all right?" I asked.

"Just before dusk," he answered.

"Well," said I, "that doesn't somehow look like Clifford. The bureau must evidently have been rifled during the last two hours. Clifford was drunk then."

"Doesn't it look like the work of a drunken man?" inquired Wade.

"Possibly," I assented, "but I happen to be able to account for the movements of Clifford during part of that time. Still, it's a difficult point. It might have been he."

"Captain, we've got to find out," said Halliday earnestly.

"You have," said Wade coolly. "I don't know that it interests me. I've got to fetch up at this island, wherever it is. I can do that if the teapot holds together."

"Captain," said Halliday, with a faint smile, "you're reckoning you ought to be in this for something. I'm not saying you shouldn't. But it seems to me I want your assistance pretty bad, and I'll pay for it. This is going to look nasty for me if I don't take

care. See, I'm frank. I'm prepared to make you an offer."

"Well, let's see how you figure it out," said Wade. "All I see is that one of your partners purloined the map, but I don't see that it's going to make any material difference to you. You've got the bearings, I presume."

"I know the map by heart, and what's more, I've got a precise copy," said Halliday. "That's not the point. The point is that they didn't know it to any account, and now they do."

"You mean——"

"I mean that if they are so disposed they can make it difficult for me over that agreement. You see, that's gone with the other things, and rather floors me."

"Oh!" Wade straightened himself. "So that's your pickle. It leaves you on a lee shore." He considered. "You want to be in a position of leverage again? All right, I'm in it for all I'm worth; and here's Hera-path too, a good man at need."

"Thank you, captain. I guess I'm obliged to you, and it won't be any loss to you."

Wade shrugged his shoulders; he was indifferent to money, but he liked a sporting hazard. He rose.

"Then we've got to run the thief to earth. I'll go bail for Marley."

Halliday nodded, but doubtfully. "I guess he and Davenant are all right."

"That narrows it to four," said Wade. "Oh, come,

we're not far off it. Let's begin at once. I'm beginning to smell like a witch doctor already."

He went out on deck. "What are you going to do?" inquired Halliday.

"You forget I have two passengers aboard who, I believe, have paid their fares; and I have the unpleasant duty of explaining to them that they cannot now be landed in Baltimore."

"Yes; I'd clean forgot that," confessed Halliday. "Though it did cross my mind at the time, only a little ready cash was needed, and the old man paid up nobly—offered five hundred dollars!"

"Five hundred!" echoed Wade. "Well, he ought to get a bit more than a desert island for that. Anyway, it's not my funeral."

He stalked away, leaving us together. "Has he got anything in his head?" asked Halliday anxiously.

"I don't know," I replied. "That's his way. Shall you acquaint Marley?"

"That's worrying me some," he returned. "Yet if it was Marley I should not be telling him anything he didn't know. Damn this sea! It's roughing up."

"I'll give you a tip," said I. "Tell each one in secrecy, and let him see you suspect all the others and not himself."

"Gee-whizz! That's a notion," he said. "Say, I'll think over that. I cotton to it some. Mr. Herapath, your wits are not wool." He walked up and down, and then stopped. "Hear any noise?"

My engines were pounding, but through that sound emerged a strain of song from below.

"Sing-song," I commented. "The owners make merry. Whatever's become of the map and the deed, I reckon the key's there."

"And the key might have been a separate theft," he remarked. "It's a puzzle. Well, I give to-night to it. Don't think a ghost walks if you hear footsteps in the small hours. I've got to worry this out."

He called good-night, and left us, and I went below for some supper. The saloon was rowdy and hilarious, and Heaven, the steward, was seated at a table with the usual gang. I called to him sharply, and gave him my order, and his glassy eyes met mine as he went off.

"Halloa, V.C.," cried the irrepressible Clifford from the other end, his head wrapped in a bandage. "Let's bury the hatchet in a pipe of peace. Come along. Great Cæsar, that was a thundering thwack! What's your poison? Mac, pass that fizz."

I said nothing, but stood staring at them, and Clifford fell into ribaldry, his face flushed purple with his potations.

"Where's the key?" he demanded, feigning to look about him anxiously. "I say, Herapath, come along. It's a game of hunt-the-slipper. You got it, Mac? No. Halloa! Damned if I don't have a go at Barney's boots. He's got 'em on. Lord, how your pockets bulge, old cock. Come and join the fun, old man. We're all in for a game of hunt-the-slipper."

Byrne sat with his significant and humorous Irish

smile on his pasty face, and McLeod scowled. I turned my back on them. It was not I who could execute the plan I had suggested to Halliday. I had too much feeling against the crew. No; Halliday alone could carry it out, and was at that moment, no doubt, turning it round in his ingenious mind.

I visited Wade before I turned in, and found him placid.

"It's no affair of ours if they have lost this damned chart," he said, "but it may be amusing. It's either Clifford or Byrne, and I'll just open accounts to-morrow with them. There's more than one lock in a ship; but only one master. I say, Ned," he added as he turned in, "that's a rum joker, that Frenchman. I told him Baltimore was off, and he looked at me so fiercely I thought he could have knifed me."

"It is outrage," he cried in his Frenchy way, and he was beginning to carry on so that I hurried to get it over.

"You must settle it with the owners. I obey orders," I told him. "But it appears they are bent on going to an unknown island for some reason of their own."

"Island," says he. "Unknown!" and was silent for a bit; after which he said quite calmly: "Very well, M. le Capitain, I accept my destiny. I see you are not to blame."

"There's fatalism for you. But he probably meant to say destination. I don't know how the girl will like it."

I was wondering myself, for she was bound to know next morning. She had been cheated into making a voyage to Baltimore without adequate preparations; and now even that limit was to be denied her, and she would find herself committed to an expedition of which no one could see the end. Certainly I could not see the end. From all signs we carried a quarrelsome party, in which were the seeds of possible mutiny. Halliday had been robbed by one of his companions; that was bad enough for a start. And his anxiety was not to flourish his loss in public, but to pursue his detective investigations under the rose. He had some reason for it, but he was silent as to that. Wade, however, was of a very different cast. He would truckle to no one, and would stand no nonsense. He was as reckless in dealing with men as with his ship. The chart, he declared, was Halliday's affair, but the key was his, and he tackled it at once.

He had Clifford and McLeod in his cabin by eight bells next day, and gave them the rough side of his tongue.

"Where's that key?" he demanded after some straight talk.

"What key?" said Clifford, blinking at him foolishly.

"Look you here, my man," said Wade sharply, "I understand you're a sort of owner of this boat, and as such, I suppose, you'll get your reward; but I'll have you know that you're also under me, and that, by God, I'll have discipline aboard. Where's that key?"

A grin spread on Clifford's mottled face. "Do you mean the key of the cellar, captain?" he asked.

"Yes," said Wade curtly.

Clifford took something from his pocket, and threw it on the table with a clank. "I'm glad to get rid of it," he said, with a deep sigh. "It's been a bally responsibility. I thought Mr. Halliday was going to take charge of it; and he might have told me he was going to leave it in the door."

"Leave it in the door!" repeated Wade.

"That's where I found it," said innocent Clifford.

"I suppose it was Mr. Halliday put it there."

Wade's brow clouded. "The key was stolen, and you know it," he said sternly. But there was no use in altercation. "Now, in future, I'll take charge of this, and I don't think you'll find it an easy matter to fool me." He got up, as if to end the audience, and added in his most significant voice: "And in the event of any trouble I'm not one to hesitate. I've used irons before now."

"This is very interesting," said Clifford politely, turning to his companion, McLeod, "isn't it, doctor? When was the last time you used irons, captain, and under what circumstances?"

Wade flushed slightly, but made no reply. Instead, he pointed to the door, and Clifford civilly gave him good-morning, and went out with his companion.

"Butter wouldn't melt in the scoundrel's mouth," he told me, "but I didn't like the look of that man McLeod. He's the man we've got to keep our eyes on. He's dan-

gerous. I shouldn't be surprised to find him run amuck some fine day. Damn it, what swine!"

The phrase seemed to describe them very well, which made me all the more annoyed to notice the friendly manner Miss Sylvester showed to the doctor. His duties were nominal, and he had all his time on his hands; with the result that he was constantly in attendance upon the girl, whom I frequently overheard laughing and talking with him. He was plain-looking, but had a fine figure, yet his appearance to my mind was disfigured at the root by the latent passion in his face. Of this, however, I must confess there was no trace when he was in Miss Sylvester's company. She had taken the news of the ship's destination with admirable good nature. I do not think she realised for one moment what it meant or might mean, and she was most probably taken with the romance of the expedition.

"Oh, Mr. Herapath, aren't you excited?" she said once, joining me breathlessly at the side of the steamer. Her face sparkled with beauty and her eyes with light. "I'm just dying to get to the island," she added ecstatically, "and then uncle and I will take our passages in another boat, and I can meet my boxes in Baltimore," she added again.

That was the tale then that she had received, and in her innocence believed. She imagined that she could tranship from our treasure island when she had exhausted its interest and her own curiosity! I did not undeceive her, for it was no business of mine, and, besides, it would have been ruthless. By this time, you see, it was known

through the ship that our destination was not Baltimore. The sealed orders should have been opened by now, and Halliday's co-partners no doubt believed that this was what had happened. They were not aware that Wade and myself had been taken into Halliday's confidence. But the word treasure had gone fore and aft, and had stimulated all hands, as if it had been an extra glass of grog. There was wonderful good temper among the crew, even the Dagoes, of whom there were several, showing smiling countenances. We had run into good weather, and were laying our new course, Wade authoritative and inscrutable as ever.

There was no trouble among the partners for some days, and we appeared to have weathered the threatened storm. That, however, was but a delusive interlude, as you shall see. It was not many days before some signs of insubordination were visible among the crew. I noticed louder voices and less reputable behaviour than are consistent with good seamanship and strict discipline. And at last, as I was descending into the lower deck, one of the hands ran into me, obviously drunk.

"What the——" he began, and lurched off. I gave Wade the information, and he caused inquiries to be made. Marley, having investigated, came back with a bad report.

"I'm very sorry, old man," he said, seated opposite his captain, whom he thus cavalierly addressed, "but there's some mischief down there. And I can't get at the bottom of it. I found two of the beggars drunk, and several had had quite as much as was good for them.

I gave the blighters a dressing down, but they're a cheeky lot, and I wouldn't trust some of them."

"Oh!" said Wade, rising, "we'll soon get to the bottom of this. Give me the names."

"Atkins and Desprez drunk," said Marley, consulting his notes, "and a lot of others—Santoni, Millevois, Carsch, Anton, Peters—had been drinking."

"Mr. Marley, be so good as to instruct Mr. Davenant to have the crew piped on deck," said Wade formally.

Marley went out and presently the boatswain's whistle was heard. I think it was a great occasion for Digby, "part owner." No one knew what was coming, not even I, though I had looked interrogatively at Wade. His face was set like a bull-dog's, his jaw stiff.

It was dark, and the men were assembled facing the upper deck, the captain on the bridge.

"My lads," shouted Wade from above, "there's some bad eggs among you, half-seas over. I want to know where you come by that stuff before I take action."

There was no reply from below, but a sort of deep murmur passed along the ranks.

"Very well. I'll have it sooner or later out of you, if I've got to hammer it out. Best be sensible," said Wade's cool voice. "I'm not going to come down hard on you. Only this has got to end."

Still there was no reply. "I'll give you four minutes," said Wade, and left the bridge. He joined me, breathing heavily.

"You can see it now, Herapath," he said. "It's

warming up. We've bit off as much as we can chew. I've seen crews all my life, and I know it."

"What's old glory at?" inquired Clifford as he brushed past me.

"He's discovered that some of his hands are drunk," I replied deliberately, "and more are fractious."

"Crikey!" he exclaimed. "Here's a go! I wish I'd not left my mammy. Let's see the fun." He pushed on precipitately, and when I turned Wade had remounted to the bridge.

"Well?" he shouted.

"There's nothing to say, sir," shouted back several voices.

"Very well," said he. "Atkins, Desprez, Santoni, Carsch, Millevois, Peters, Anton——" he completed the list. "Remain! All others resume duty, or go below."

There was a movement visible among the squad, a movement of disintegration, and then suddenly, and without a further word on anyone's part, a fierce stream of water from two hoses began to play upon them from the upper deck. There followed at once a stampede and confusion, and savage oaths reached us. But the hoses played on, and the victims bolted in various directions. The batteries sought them in hiding-places; the deck was searched, until at last it was empty, untenanted, and dripping in the faint light. Wade descended from the bridge now, and not a muscle of his face moved. He went to his cabin without a remark. It was Clifford who made the comment.

"Gosh! How's that for high? The dook is on his hind legs."

"Damn silly thing to do," growled Marley in my ears. "It wasn't bad fun, and it'll sober them up. But damn silly thing to do."

Davenant was beside us, blinking through his glasses at the scene.

CHAPTER VI

M'LEOD

HALLIDAY was confined to his cabin again, for the wind had swollen to half a gale, and the sea was running heavily. He had stood out against his weakness in a gallant manner, but had been forced to capitulate. Red-eyed, pink-nosed, and pinched of face, he had retired, and we did not see him for two days. But during those two days we were not idle. Indeed, things became very lively for us, owing in the main to Wade's high-handed action. He had the temper of an autocrat, and he had the right, but I question if it was wise to take the step he did. And yet when one thinks of what afterwards happened at the island, it is impossible to say whether events would have been affected had he stayed his hand.

The trouble began, as usual, with Clifford, that cheerful, leering scoundrel, who seemed absolutely to delight in disorder and rows out of sheer wantonness. With this news of the crew in his ears Wade summoned the storekeeper before him again. He did not beat about the bush with useless threats, but went straight to the point. He demanded of Clifford his accounts and books.

"Books," said this Beelzebub, staring. "I didn't know you had to keep books!"

"Think they kept themselves?" sneered Wade.

Clifford grinned. Nothing could perturb that shameless bosom.

"Damn it, if I'd known there was any of that tommyrot I wouldn't have taken it on," he said. "Anyway, I've got the cash, and I'll shell out."

He reappeared presently, with a piece of paper on which were some accounts, and Wade inspected it.

"This isn't the slightest use to me," he remarked shortly. "This purports to give the amount of stores dispensed, but where is the account of the stores shipped?"

"How the deuce was I to know that was wanted?" asked Clifford with apparent vexation; but I could see the glint in his eyes that spoke of vicious laughter. "I've got some of the invoices," he added, as if in mitigation of his negligence.

"Including those for wine and rum?" asked Wade, once more with his sneer.

"It's possible. I couldn't say," said Clifford easily. "I'll have a look if you like."

"Pray do," said Wade politely, and we waited. "That man's very clever," he remarked in an even voice. "It's a rare combination, cunning and audacity, and goes far to make a first-class scoundrel."

Clifford returned jauntily. "No; I find there's no wine or spirits invoices," he said cheerfully, and grinned at both of us. Then he went off into laughter.

"You may go," said Wade curtly, and when he was gone, turned to me. "He's one of my owners! Great Scott! The mischief of it is we can't discover how much

of the spirits they've cached. No one but this cherub knows how much came aboard. We must only reckon on this now, that they've got their separate cellar, and are going to use it when they like."

This was exactly what happened. We were unable to trace the source of the drinking, but drinking continued. The men were well supplied with rum from some secret fount, and the discipline of the ship deteriorated in a marked degree. Both Marley and Davenant reported their inability to stem the growing disorder. It was not that the hands were mutinous, but they were in a lax state, and resented the routine of duty. Also they assumed a familiarity to which they were ordinarily foreign. I cannot imagine that the man Crashaw could ever have developed a greater offence of manner than was natural to his bold gait, but the demoralisation showed in almost all the others, who were wont on occasion to indulge in winks and nudges and significant grins in the presence of any of their officers. If the sousing to which some of them had been subjected rankled in their minds we saw nothing of that. It was merely now that they shared a joke against us.

Marley fumed, Davenant shrugged his shoulders, and Wade was philosophically silent. I think he expected something worse and was saving up for it. Hallyday reappeared for a short time, and in his sharp way noted the altered behaviour of the crew. But he took it with nonchalance. His indomitable spirit could be nothing but optimistic.

"Say, they'll settle down, the boys will," he remarked.

"They're going a bit free, I don't doubt, but that's the liquor. If I thought it was that blamed Clifford—— But, anyway, they'll settle down."

I inquired on this occasion as to his progress in discovering the thief, and he looked down his nose.

"Fact is, Mr. Herapath," he said, "I didn't have time to get a hold of it. I quite cottoned to your notion, and I acted on it."

"Well?" I queried with interest.

He stroked his clean-shaven face demurely. "Well, I told each of them in private that I had lost a document, and that of the whole lot I was only perfectly sure of him. Do you see? That was the lay, wasn't it? Well," his voice became dry, and his manner drier, "they each said they guessed that was so, and that they suspected the others. That didn't seem to get us much farther." A furtive smile dawned on his face.

"What, did Marley and Davenant say that?" I asked.

"I kinder let them out," he answered. "But the other four did, and Digby gave me to understand bluntly that he had never kept company with such trash in his life, having been born a gentleman."

"He drinks with them," said I; "and, after all, it is possible they were all born gentlemen."

"It's a word that puzzles me," said Halliday. "What does it signify anyway? Still, if it is going to count as an umbrella, I'll bet my last greenback that it doesn't cover Clifford."

No, Clifford defied analysis. He quoted the classics,

and he had a varied vocabulary, but he had no pretensions to having ever once been a gentleman. He was born a "bounder." And an amazing bounder! For here my narrative touches farce. Halliday driven back into his cabin by stress of weather, Clifford approached Wade, and offered his assistance to quell the insubordinate crew!

"Before they get ugly," he urged, with his grin.

I was not present at the interview, and I never heard exactly what happened, but I know Clifford ran the risk of having his head broken a second time. "I sent him to the right about," was all Wade said. But having been cheated of his office of peace-maker, Clifford apparently decided to go out as a volunteer. He mingled with the men a good deal, hobnobbed with them, and chaffed them, but I did not observe that his missionary efforts were much rewarded. On the contrary, the hands' familiarity was increased, though it was good-natured enough.

Meanwhile the voyage had been uneventful for Miss Sylvester and her uncle, but both seemed quite satisfied with their surroundings. The girl enjoyed the novelty of her position, and pelted me, and all of us, with questions as to the island and the treasure. I could honestly say I knew nothing, but that could not be McLeod's excuse for silence. And, indeed, I have reasons to believe that he told her as much as he knew. Clifford, of course, she never condescended to notice in any way, and to Byrne, his constant associate and boon companion, she paid scant attention. She concentrated herself socially

upon Wade, McLeod, the two officers, and myself, and of these McLeod was most in her company. Davenant was polite but formal, and Marley was too roughly hewn to take a young girl's fancy. In an ordinary way ship-board intimacy is easily established, and given that ingenuous and open nature of the girl, it was not difficult to account for the friendly relations which she maintained with McLeod. The man himself was improved by this association, as one had grudgingly to admit. It removed him a good deal from the society of Byrne and Clifford, and brought out better points in a wild nature. Yet he was still listed as dangerous in my private books, and not without justice.

In the dusk of one evening, when we had fairly run into the West Indian waters, I was upon the lower deck on some errand, and at the back of some kegs I came upon a seaman stooped over something.

"What is it, Carter?" I inquired.

He raised his head as a turtle raises his, and straightened himself, laughing awkwardly.

"It's Joyce," he said; and added: "I reckon he ought to have the hose, sir."

I saw now what it was. The drunken man lay stertorous and helpless. I eyed Carter, a slow-moving, bulky, dull-witted fellow, with huge, capable hands.

"I oughtn't to say it," I said; "but it would be wiser for him to be out of this. If I were you and your friends, Carter, I'd get him below."

"That's what I was going to do, sir," said Carter in a confidential manner.

"Very well," said I. "I haven't seen anything. But when you've disposed of him I wouldn't take it amiss if you came to my cabin, Carter."

"Very well, sir," he said, staring heavily. And I left him.

Now this was deliberately designed on my part. I was using a sprat, so to speak, to catch a mackerel. If I had not shown myself sympathetic over Joyce's inanimate body I should have alienated Carter. At any rate, he would not have been likely to give me any assistance. It remained to see if he would in any case. He knocked half-an-hour later, when the dark had fully descended.

"I couldn't come before, sir," he explained, "as I—well, I hadn't the chance."

He displayed some confusion, and I drew my own inference—namely, that he had not wanted to be seen visiting me, and hence had waited until the dusk had deepened.

"Well, Carter," I said diplomatically, "sit down, I want to have a talk. Joyce all right?"

"Yes, sir—nicely laid in bed."

Carter was ill at ease, and ponderous of manner. The machinery of his brain turned so rustily that he hardly recognised it was in motion.

"About this drinking, Carter?"

"Yes, sir."

"You know it won't do. I'm not going to say anything about Joyce, or what I've seen, but it's got to stop if we're not going to get into trouble. I don't even

ask where it comes from. All I want to have is an assurance that the men will go slow on it."

Carter fumbled with his thoughts. "I don't know, sir. Some of them's a bit hard to head off."

"True; but, I suppose, there's someone in authority over the supplies?"

I spoke as if it was quite a natural thing that they should have their private cellar, and my tone was rather that of one who begs a friend for assistance.

"Oh, 'Eaven's no good," he said thoughtlessly, and then it dawned on him what he had said. I gave no sign of receiving this information with astonishment or satisfaction, but, ignoring the trouble in his eyes, continued in the same tone.

"Well, anyway, Carter, there ought to be someone able to put a stop to this excessive drinking. It's bound to lead to trouble."

"There ought, sir," he agreed, looking relieved.

"Understand me," I pursued. "It's for the sake of the ship I say this. I'm not blaming the men for enjoying themselves within reason. I like a drop myself. But there are evidently some of them who can't help making pigs of themselves."

"That's true, sir," said Carter, "and I could put a name to them too; but I don't like splitting on pals."

"I wouldn't ask you to," I replied. "Of course, we know that Heaven distributes the rum, but we don't know where it is."

"Oh, you knew that, sir?" said Carter, staring.

"Why, do you suppose we're blind?" I asked. "I don't like Heaven, and I don't trust him."

Carter glanced about cautiously before speaking. "Well, it isn't for me to say, sir, but I don't like his goings-on. Of course, I wouldn't say anything to come between my shipmates and myself; but I don't like 'Eaven, and that's flat."

"Ah, Carter," said I sadly, shaking my head, and drawing a bow at a venture. "It's not so much Heaven as those who are above and ought to know better than he. I blame them."

I had to angle him, you see, but the operation repaid me. He leaned forward mysteriously.

"You're right, sir. I don't want to open my mouth about no one, but I wouldn't trust that there doctor, not for nuts."

"Ah, you've observed then?" I said, nodding. "You've a shrewd mind, Carter."

"Observed?" he said, now quite lumberingly confidential. "Why, I seed him."

"That day?" said I vaguely.

He nodded, and went on in a lower voice. "I was swabbin' the deck by the charthouse, and it was pretty dark, and I see him go into Mr. Halliday's cabin. 'Twas him took the key, sir, sure enough."

"Carter," said I, clapping him on the back, "this is important. You're a very important witness."

He looked uncomfortable. "I wouldn't do anything that was unfriendly to my mates," he said in a crest-fallen way.

"You needn't," I said. "I think I can promise you won't be called upon to do anything. But we must maintain discipline aboard. You know that as well as I, don't you?"

"Yes, sir; of course, sir," he said, cheering up.

"And now, Carter," I went on, "as this is an exceptional occasion, I think I may ask you to join me in a glass."

"Thank ye, sir," he said, now quite at his ease.

I took the information forthwith to Wade, who heard me out, frowned, and rang a bell.

"Heaven we'll deal with in due course," he said. "But McLeod is a more important matter. We'll settle that right away."

"I don't want to bring in Carter's name if possible," I said. "I took advantage of him, and I feel rather mean about it."

"You're so thin-skinned, my son," said he. "But I think I can bluff it all right without him," and broke off to give an order. "Ask Mr. Marley, Mr. Davenant, and Dr. McLeod if they will be good enough to join me here."

Marley arrived before the others, and saw by Wade's face that something was wrong.

"What's the row?" he asked.

"Court of justice," said Wade.

"McLeod," said I.

Marley whistled. "I thought the blighter would tumble into it sooner or later," he said.

There was a noise outside, and the door opened, Davenant slipping in softly but with rather a flushed

face. On his heels came McLeod, tall, wiry, and swaggering. At a glance I saw he had been with his friends.

"What's up?" he asked.

Wade eyed him steadily. "Last week," he said abruptly, "Mr. Halliday's cabin was entered, his bureau was broken into, and a key was abstracted. The thief was seen and identified by witnesses who have only just come forward. He was Dr. McLeod."

Marley called out in surprise: "The devil!"

Davenant looked from one to the other, from the accuser to the accused. McLeod did not break out, as I had expected, but a sneer spread over his face.

"Is that what you've summoned me here to tell me?" he asked in his brusque Scottish voice.

"I charge you, sir, in the presence of these gentlemen," said Wade sternly, "and give you warning of the proceedings which will follow. You have been guilty of theft."

"Oh," said McLeod quietly enough and very Doric, but the anger swelling within him was visible through all. "Is that all? It's very considerate of you, Captain Mark Wade, as they call you—very considerate indeed; and I take it friendly like to——"

"There is another matter also," broke in Wade coldly. "You stole not only a key, but a chart and a document, both the private property of Mr. Halliday, who——"

"It's a damned lie, you damned liar!" cried the Scotsman, his fury suddenly overflowing in passion; and lifting his fist he struck Wade over the forehead, and drove his head against the woodwork.

CHAPTER VII

CONCERNING THE CHART

DAVENANT took hold of the savage, and Wade recovered himself. In that moment I admired his self-control, for his hands were trembling, and his face had whitened. But he remembered even then that he was on the bench, and there was a perceptible pause before any word was said. McLeod, restrained between Davenant and Marley, was unabashed, but he made no attempt to renew his outrage.

"This is a case for irons," said Wade quietly. "Mr. Herapath, will you kindly get a couple of men."

"Irons be——" cried McLeod, and strove to throw off the hands that held him. Davenant remonstrated with him in the struggle that followed, and I caught the words:

"The man called me a thief. I'll let blood out of any man that calls me thief."

I ended the struggle by putting my arms over his from behind, so that he could make no movement; and meanwhile Wade had rung. It was not a pleasant sight, but it had to be endured, and Wade watched the operation of ironing unperturbed. McLeod, having ceased to resist, had turned sullen, and malevolence kindled in his eyes as he was taken away.

"I don't know, gentlemen," remarked Wade care-

fully, "if this is going to do us any good. We've got the thief, but I don't quite see what we are going to do with him. It isn't as if we were able to hand him over to port authorities. We're not likely to trouble port authorities much at present, as far as I can make out. Anyway, the gentleman is better where he is for a time."

This was admirably self-restrained, but I think that blow on the head determined a good deal for Wade, and for the the rest of us. He had been up to that point a shipmaster beyond reproach, holding his position with exemplary manner. From this incident dates the development of his bravado which was characteristic of one side of his nature. The unusual conditions of this curious expedition had hitherto just failed to divert him from his course; now he fell. And the first sign of his changing demeanour was apparent the very next morning.

News had gone about the ship, and even our passengers were acquainted early with McLeod's disgrace. Something unintelligible in the nature of woman, perverse and irrational, but sympathetic, stirred Miss Sylvester to a display of agitation and even indignation. It was horrid; it was unjust; it was cruel. She knew there must be a mistake. And if McLeod had hit the captain, anyone with spirit would do the same if he were accused of stealing.

This you might have looked upon as the amiable but embarrassing complaints of a child. It was to me she pleaded thus, distressfully and angrily, and a sense of her vivacious beauty moved me.

"It's the gravest nautical offence," I said. "To look over it would be to dissolve the whole discipline upon which the safety of crew and passengers depends."

"It was Captain Wade's fault," she repeated vehemently, "and I'll tell him so. And I'll ask him to release Dr. McLeod from his shameful position."

And Wade making his appearance negligently at that moment, she fulfilled her promise by rushing upon him.

"Captain Wade, you must just release Dr. McLeod. It's abominable of you to have put him in irons. He was quite justified in striking you when you told him he was a thief. And he didn't hurt you much anyway."

Wade's eyes lighted up with amusement. "Not much," he assented. "But it might have been awkward if he had caught me a little lower—say, just there, Miss Sylvester." And he indicated a spot above his ear. "I don't think a week to cool down will harm him."

"A week!" she shrilled, horror-struck.

Wade's eyes admired her. "Oh, my dear Miss Sylvester, he's a lucky man to have enlisted such an advocate. Say six days."

"Six days!" She looked despair at him.

"Five," he relented; and she shook her head decisively.

"Come then, four," he pursued, smiling.

"I won't consent to four," said the girl, displaying now in her change of voice a recognition of her intervening influence.

"If you are going to be very kind," I heard Wade say in his most wooing voice, "I'll make it three."

Again she shook her head. The affair had dropped for her straightway out of the category of tragedy, and was becoming a mere nothing, owing to his treatment of it. She had expected a grim tyrant and an executioner's cell, and here was a pleasant cavalier ready to grant a lady's whim. With that her own portentous emotion vanished, and she returned his smile.

"It was very cruel of you," she said. "You oughtn't to have done it at all. Dr. McLeod——"

I passed out of hearing, and I never heard the end of that haggling, but it represented the new order in Wade. McLeod was not released that day, and even I was disposed to think he had been hardly treated. After all, we had no proof that he had rifled the bureau, and his violent outbreak seemed to indicate his good faith. Carter might have been mistaken. Anyway, we had not tried him, and though it was for his assault he had been sentenced, he went to gaol, so to speak, with the stain of a crime on his reputation which had not been proved.

Wade was about with Miss Sylvester most of the day. He had a very facile gallantry, and took to it naturally. Women were to him objects of flirtation, to whom you were bound to make love. His sentiments never soared higher than this. And with these ideas he kept himself, and, as a rule, the ladies very well amused. As for Miss Sylvester, I thought she exchanged the com-

pany of the imprisoned man for the man who had imprisoned him with surprising indifference. To all accounts, and to judge by her laughter on deck, she had wholly forgotten the victim languishing in his cell—an odd contrast with her emotion in the morning on learning of his fate.

The fall of McLeod thus promptly had its effect on the boon companions. If I may say so, it sobered Clifford; and Byrne lost his smile. I dare say they had begun to wonder whose turn would come next. They “let up” on the bottle, as Marley phrased it, if they did not alter their general mode of life. They associated together, and were to be seen in conversation much; they did no work; and they lolled on deck in slovenly attire, or slept in their cabins in still easier garments. For the sun was now quite strong in heaven, and the weather was summer-like. Halliday, recovered sufficiently in the smoother water, once more took the stage, full of notions which he had elaborated in his seclusion. But first he must learn our news, and McLeod’s downfall.

“Well, I shouldn’t have thought it of him,” was his comment. “But he’s a cantankerous chap. Anyway, I’ve thought this out, and see here, I reckon those three are in it together. They’ve got my agreement and the chart, and I stand to lose a lot unless I can square it up. Oh, I’ll get them all right. I’m not feeling soft over it.”

“It doesn’t matter to you more than the sentiment of it,” I told him. “You’ve lost your agree-

ment, but Marley and Davenant and Digby have theirs, and they can be produced in evidence."

"Yes, I thought of that," he answered. "But I guess it ain't so easy. It's all right about those three, but where do the other three come in? They may claim a verbal agreement, defy me to produce mine, and they're three mouths to one. Not but what it's risky for them. But blamed if I can see," he went on, frowning, "what they want that map for. I've been puzzling on that all the while I've been laid out in that bunk there. I guess they guess I knew all about it and have a copy."

"Well, I don't know anything about it," I said. "But I'll go bail that they don't mean the square thing by you—unless, that is, it's mere drunken wantonness and folly. It's possible it's that. One might as well live in Bedlam as with some of these folk. If I were you, Mr. Halliday, I would have chosen better."

"That's so," he said. "I'm not going to say if I hadn't to do it over again I wouldn't. But I can't shake 'em now; I've got to make the best of it. And come to think of it from my point of view, I hadn't much of a chance. I had to hurry."

"Hurry?" said I. "Why, was there any other——"

"It's kind of romantic," said Halliday, crossing his legs as we sat in his comfortable cabin. He had hospitably placed before me a bottle of wine, but took nothing himself, nor did he smoke. He looked pale and languid, but was irrepressibly buoyant. His mind, to adapt Dryden's phrase, was, one imagined, fretting

his meagre body to decay. "I don't know but it isn't worth putting on record. It's a good newspaper story anyway. I was doing a line for our company, letting the great British public know that the Union Mutual Insurance Company had come to Europe to stir up things and smooth the path to the grave of the very strongest." His eyes twinkled, for he had his full share of humour along with his strange intensity. "I guess I've smoothed many paths, made it easy for them to die. But this one I couldn't exactly see my way to smoothing. One day, when I was in Liverpool, I got track of a big policy way up your mountains—Fell Something they called it—and I lit out for it. Settled the contract, and came away pretty content, on a dripping misty day, with the autumnal flavour hanging round so thick you could cut it and keep it with your cheeses. I went bang into the inn on the hillside, when I'd finished with the Park, and had something to eat." He broke off. "Say, Herapath, do you cotton to that beer of yours—bitter beer, you call it?"

"We all swear by English beer," I answered.

"That's so," he said rather sadly and reminiscently. "Well, I'm blamed if I can see the fascination of it. I'd sooner chew gum. It's like that book in the Revelations, you remember. Anyway, I had some food, and a glass of milk, and then it struck me that I might as well improve the shining hours on the business end of a pen; and so I set about a red-faced farmer at the table who'd been to market from the look of him, and

wasn't going to get home for a long time by the same look of him.

"I rained figures and facts on him, like it was raining outside, trotted up all the arguments—reminded him of his children, which, it seemed, he hadn't got; told him of his duty to his wife, who turned out to be dead; and just about snowed him under with the benefits and advantages and privileges of the Union Mutual. When I was done, or very nearly done, and had come to a stop for rest and refreshments so to speak, he opened his mouth, which he had kept closed like a trap all along, and woke up.

"'Look 'ee, mister,' says he. 'There's nobbut myself depending on me, and I'm not thinking of dying yet. I'll live to drink old October, dammy, another forty year. What you young folks ought to do is to save men from dying, lad, not offer to give 'un money when they're dead. It's encouraging dying, I call it,' he says. 'You come along and tell all you said here to a chap upstairs,' said he, 'and he'll insure, he will. I'll bet five pund he'll insure,' he cried.

"Well, upstairs I went, into a room of the inn, which turned out to be a bedroom, and on the bed was a man, old and withered and parched, and looking out of lacklustre eyes and signed all over by the undertaker.

"'Jarge,' he calls out to this farmer. 'Jarge, here's a young fellow to insure 'ee.' And off he goes into a fit of laughter.

"I was mighty sick, as you may guess, at the disappointment, but I wasn't going to let the old buffer

get it in the neck for a tipsy man's wanton jest. So I took a seat by the bed, and just began to talk in an easy way about the weather, and the beautiful scenery, and old Sir Harry up at the Park, and all that sausage meat. Never a word said he, but lay looking at me out of his poor, scarecrow face. The farmer had stumped downstairs.

"Now, there's a little proverb, Herapath—comes in Scripture somewhere, and there's a lot in those Biblical proverbs—that talks about casting your bread upon the waters. I had just done a kind, decent action, and I wasn't thinking of my reward. But I guess this boat's floated out of that same bedroom. Old man listens to me, and then puts out a claw.

"‘Are you Diggory's man?’ said he.

"‘I guess not,’ said I.

"‘Then you must be my nephew,’ says he eagerly.

"Well, I saw how it was with him then, and how all my polite conversation had been thrown away; and just to play up to him, so to speak, I said yes, I was that nephew.

"He half rose on his elbow at that, and began searching under his pillow, and presently brings out in his shaking claw a piece of parchment.

"‘That's for you,’ he said. ‘I kept that for you till ye come. ’Tis what I had from Sawtell of the brig *Dromeda*’ (or some such name). ‘The treasure's marked,’ says he, rising higher in his excitement, and pointing at the paper.

"‘All right, uncle,’ said I soothingly. ‘It's safe with

me. You can bet on your nephew.' And I nodded and patted his hand, and soothed him down, and cheered him up, till he sort of settled down comfortably, and seemed to sleep. And then I went out, but I believe old man died just then and there. Anyway, he was dead an hour later when they went to look.

"When I came down the farmer was gone, but I entered into talk with the landlord about the old man, and this was what made me study that paper pretty smartly presently. Old man, he said, came from these parts, but had followed the sea for fifty years, and had come home six months before and taken to his bed. He had money enough, but always talked mysteriously of more, and inquired for his brother, who was dead years back, and then for his brother's children. Well, it seems they were gone too—only one was heard of way in New Zealand, or some place. And old man wrote to him, but didn't get any answer. Anyway, it hadn't come up till then. Old man talked a lot about money, and of an island, but, says the innkeeper:

"'Lord, sir, he's been like a child these three months. There warn't any sense in his poor head, poor Jarge!'

"Wasn't there? I studied that paper and came to the conclusion that there was, and I lit out that night for civilisation and a deal."

"The paper was the map?" I asked in astonishment.

"Yes, sir; the paper contained the chart, and a story. It wasn't an old parchment of the treasure-story tales with crosses and skulls and that truck,

not by long chalks. It was a business-like document, setting forth how it had been drawn up on such a date, and was a plan of Santo Island, where the Caribbean pirates buried their treasure way back. And there was the signature of two or three people who had successively come into possession of the chart, old man Glasson last of all, with the dates. It was kept like a book, I tell you. And the first name was Rinaldo Corti."

"Is that all you've gone on?" I burst out, in wonder at this amazing faith.

He turned on me the eyes of an enthusiast. "Mr. Herapath, we've all got to take risks, but I reckon this risk was good enough. I lit out at once for fear of that nephew, who might be turning up from New Zealand. I went down the wolds or the fells, or whatever you call them, in a white mist of rain, and I pounded along the track sometimes; I was that pleased with myself. Old man Glasson, by the evidence of the innkeeper, had plenty of money, and there was his endorsement on the paper. 'December 1861'; I know it by heart, 'visited island and treasure'; and again '5 March 1882, made island sunset, in *Emerald*; was ashore two hours. Treasure all right.' And there was a signature also. 'H. Sawtell,' just as the old man said it; and the ship was *Andromeda*. That looked all right, for Sawtell in 1847 had 'took box ingots treasure'; and there was other scribblings. Mr. Herapath," he said, his eyes shining, "what was good enough for H. Sawtell of the *Andromeda* in 1847, and for old man Glasson in 1861 and 1882, was good enough for Vincent Halliday. I know

a good thing when I'm on it. I can smell it. It talks like Limburger on the surrounding atmosphere to my nose. And I tell you, this is about bursting with goodness."

He ceased. "That's the story. Kind of romantic, ain't it?" It was more than romantic; it was grotesque.

"It looks to me like a wild-goose chase," I said bluntly.

"You don't size the proposition," said he earnestly. "It's a fact that the treasure has been tapped. It was there all right. That's demonstrated by the paper and the old man."

"Why was it not all removed long ago?" I asked.

"Ah, there's a bit of a puzzle," he admitted. "Seems to me that it was not worked systematically, that it was used as a sort of bank on which to draw cheques. Come and cut again sort of game. You see, this document has been handed down one, two, or maybe more generations, and the owner was temporarily owner of that island and that store. It's not a place, I guess, where many ships call, and it might be awkward to put in there. Come to think of it, Herapath, any one of these dead men mightn't have cared to face an expedition like this of ours. There's always a risk. They went in for it in detail." He pondered. "I might have done that myself. But I was sort of greedy to swallow it all in a bite. But I might have done that myself."

He merged in a reverie, and I observed him. The story had oddly stimulated me, but had convinced me

also that we were on a madder cruise than ever. This "proposition" had no ethical side for Halliday, who was a "smart man." He had come into possession of his precious document by a mistake, even by false pretences, but it troubled him nothing. This was business, and it was his business to get ahead of a possible claimant in the Antipodean nephew, who might even now be in chase of us.

He shook off his thoughts. "Anyway, I'm coming out on top," he said cheerfully.

With the influence of these seas on him he was alive and bright again. Every hour brought his fortune nearer, and he walked the deck with a buoyant tread, as of one who could hardly be contained by narrow confines of shipboard. His soul was aloft, as upon a mast-head, in search of his treasure.

The second day saw the release of McLeod, which I could not but attribute to Miss Sylvester. Some bargain had been struck between herself and Wade. The prisoner, his own master, was directed to the captain's cabin, and entered it sour, sullen, but unresisting.

"Now, Dr. McLeod," said Wade, at whose request I was there, "I want some words with you. As captain of this ship, and bound to maintain discipline, I have put you in irons. That's my official appearance in the matter. Well, reckon that's over. The irons were official. But, as a man, I've got something more to say. You struck me here, and now I'm going to knock you down."

McLeod lifted his head and stared. He had had no strong liquor for nearly two days, and was all the better for it. His face relaxed.

"Go ahead," he said.

Wade launched forth, but met the Scotsman's bony arm in counter. His left followed like a stone, and was dodged with the head. McLeod's returns went short, and then Wade's short, thick arm slipped past the defence, and he landed on the doctor's skull. Crack went his head against the cabin.

"Quits!" panted Wade, dropping his hands.

A grin dawned on McLeod's face. "We'll call it that," he assented, and marched out of the cabin without more words.

"I don't know that he's so dangerous, after all, Ned," said Wade.

He was, however, viciously cantankerous, for having thus buried his feud with Wade, he must needs reopen one with me. Down in the saloon we encountered just after the scene described, and he came up.

"It's about time we squared up, Mr. Herapath," said he with a provocative air.

It was possible that he was affronted by my presence at his discomfiture.

"I've no accounts open," I remarked tersely.

"Oh!" his voice took on a higher note and accent. "Then I'll take the liberty to remind ye." He lifted his hand, but I put out mine to stop him.

"Don't be a fool," I urged. "There's been more than enough of this already."

"I'll jog your memory," he said, paying no heed, but doubling his fist.

"Well, I don't want to, but if you will have it——" I drove as I spoke. He was not far away, and I got him on the tip of the chin. He went down like a sack of wheat, and sat for some moments on the floor, blinking. Then he got up, and blinked at me, holding on to the table.

"Which hand was that?" he gasped.

"Left," I answered.

"Then I'm not taking any more," he replied. "And I've got a dentist's job on."

He went away in the direction of his surgery, and I saw him no more till the evening. But of that I shall have to tell in the next chapter. To say the truth, I had no time to think of him, being fully occupied in the engine-room.

Davenant late in the afternoon ordered me to slow down, and we were going only some eight knots. Wade was asleep in his cabin, for the day was very hot and the breeze had sunk. The caulks of the *Duncannon* ran liquid, and the stokehole was like hell. Davenant never left the bridge till his watch was over at eight bells. But before that something happened. Byrne and Clifford, strangely quiet, were on deck, watching the sea, and as the sun went down the latter took a flask from his pocket, "swigged" at it, and passed it to his companion.

The dusk fell quickly, gathering the steamer with its growing folds, and then from the lookout arose the cry:

"Land ho!"

Giving instructions to Collins, I went on deck, and strained my eyes through the evening. On our starboard side a long even shadow was visible against the night. Wade emerged from his cabin to take command. Halliday was visible, a restless shadow among shadows, excited, nervous, confident. And a voice somewhere out of the darkness reached my ears.

"Now the fun begins, dear brethren."

It was Clifford's.

CHAPTER VIII

THE OTHER BOAT

WADE joined Davenant on the bridge, and I went back to my engines, which were running now quite slowly. Presently they were stopped, and I heard the sound of the capstan. They were letting go the anchor. My duties were over for the nonce, and I went on deck again, where the whole ship's company seemed to be assembled. With the making of the island the public interest in the story of the treasure revived keenly. Knots of men discussed the situation, and cast glances through the falling dusk towards the mysterious land. Halliday was decisive and triumphant. His voice rose clamant through all the din.

"I reckon, captain, I'll go ashore to-night," he said.

"As you will," said Wade, "though I should advise you to wait till to-morrow."

The American laughed. "Say, that's asking too much," he said; and in a lower voice: "I'd just like to locate that cache at the earliest opportunity."

Wade nodded. "You must have been wearing out those old engines of yours from the pace we've made," he said, turning to me.

"On the contrary," said I, "we slowed down this afternoon."

"Slowed down!" he said in surprise.

"Yes; we didn't make more than eight knots."

"Damn!" said he, and was thoughtful. "I didn't expect to make it for another two hours anyway," he said.

"Well, Davenant's done it," I said carelessly. "Here we are."

"Unless he's made a mistake—but that he couldn't," pronounced Wade. "I'll have a look at the log presently. They're out in their infernal sealed orders probably."

Meanwhile Halliday was giving his instructions, and a boat was being put out. We lay about three-quarters of a mile from the island, but naturally were ignorant of the shore-line. Wade had never seen the chart, or even Halliday's transcript, and had navigated only by the instructions he received, which amounted merely to an exact latitude and longitude, so that in approaching a boat would need great precaution.

There was competition for the boat's crew; but Davenant chose it, and immediately upon the boat's being lowered Byrne and Clifford scrambled in. Wade said nothing to them, but pointed them out to Halliday, who remarked:

"Well, I guess it's due to them perhaps. They've got money in it"; and he added: "And I'd just as soon have them under observation for the sake of that chart."

"Do you know what sort of coast you've got here?" asked Wade.

"No," replied Halliday. "It don't say on the chart. But I guess we're all right with you."

"Oh, with me!" said Wade, laughing easily. "Marley's good enough."

"Why don't you go, sir?" asked Davenant, who was near. "There's nothing to do here."

"Come along, captain," said Halliday engagingly.

"Right!" said Wade. "I don't mind."

He stood beside the gangway and Miss Sylvester at that moment turned to him. "Oh, please let me go," she urged prettily.

He hesitated. "I'm awfully sorry," he said, "but we don't know exactly what we've got here. There's a bit of risk. And I daren't take you. When we've found out—to-morrow, Miss Sylvester——" He descended the ladder, smiling back his apologies, and took his seat in the boat. This was now quite full, and at Marley's word put off. The sound of oars came back to us from the darkness into which she disappeared.

The air blew cool and friendly after the hot afternoon, and the *Duncannon* hardly moved on the smooth sea. There was an indefinite sense of peacefulness, as of a holiday mood, omnipresent in the mind. A concertina struck up on the lower deck, and someone started whistling. A noise of feet rose to us as of dancing.

"A bit merry," said I to Digby, the boatswain.

"Give 'em their heads a bit," he grumbled back. "Damn bad discipline, but there's been no discipline aboard this ship." I looked at his worn face, and I confess I was hoping that I should not show so battered by fortune at his years. "I'm an old sailor, but I'm

not a tar," he said with a faint humorous irony. "I had my own boat at the mouth of the Thames for years, when I was on the Stock Exchange. We used to keep her and sail her as trim as a ship in His Majesty's Commission."

I began in that instant somehow to get the perspective of this expedition. You know how a phrase, a fact, a suggestion, will open up a situation like a key. "Digby, stock-jobber," ran into my mind, and I could see his zigzag descents in my mind's eye right away to the possession of his preposterous whistle. At thirty, maybe, he was partner in a prosperous firm of dealers or brokers; at fifty odd he was reduced to his final gamble, no doubt through the medium of other and exhausting gambles. The concertina wheezed on, and the strains of "Sailing Away" arose on the evening air and mingled with the water noises. Digby and I hung over the side of the vessel and meditated. Presently I was aware that Miss Sylvester had joined us, and I turned.

"Oh, what a sin to be here when we might be ashore!" she exclaimed energetically. "I don't know how you stand it."

"We have to," said I.

"Oh, nonsense; I believe you don't mind," she said in her characteristic way. "You don't feel things. I just can't bear to think of that island and the treasure being over there, and me a prisoner."

"The captain must take every precaution," I told her.

She sighed. "I suppose it's right, but—— Is that you, uncle? Wouldn't you like to be going ashore?"

M. Carvaulx peered through the darkness at us. "No; yes; I do not mind," he said absently. "It is pleasant listening to the music of the sailors." He moved off forward, and I heard him descend to the lower deck.

Just before dinner Davenant sent for me. I found him lying down in his bunk.

"Mr. Herapath," he said in his careful voice, "I have a bad attack of neuralgia, and I should be all the better for a sleep. I should be obliged if you would kindly take charge. Of course, you would call me in case of any emergency."

I assented, and withdrew after expressing a polite hope that he would soon recover; and then I descended to the saloon. At dinner we were a small party—Digby, McLeod, M. Carvaulx, Miss Sylvester, and myself; but we were more cheerful than we had been on several previous occasions. The arrival at the island had stimulated our imaginations and our good humour. McLeod was a different man from the person I had hitherto known. He talked fluently and with a certain capacity for conversation, but mainly to Miss Sylvester and her uncle. The latter was abstracted and said little, but his niece was gay and high-spirited, joining in rallies with the doctor. From their attitude I thought they had some understanding between them, some affair in common, for this was betrayed at once by McLeod's importance and Miss Sylvester's significant asides.

And I was soon let into the secret. For as soon as the meal was over McLeod approached me.

"I believe you're in authority, Mr. Herapath," he said not unpleasantly.

"Mr. Davenant is ill," I said.

"Well, sir, I want your permission to go ashore," he went on boldly, eyeing me with some aggression. Miss Sylvester was, so to speak, in the offing. I glanced at her.

"Is that all?" I asked.

"No," said he promptly. "Miss Sylvester wants to go. If we could have a boat and a couple of hands we should not be gone long."

"You know it's impossible," I replied.

"Why should it be?" he asked, evidently restraining himself; "there's fine starlight, and the coast's quite clear. It's only a quarter of an hour away."

I went to the porthole and looked out, and Miss Sylvester joined me, eager appeal in her eyes.

"You will, won't you?" she pleaded.

The stars in the sky shed a fine light on the still water, making a luminous mist towards the land. I had no orders from Wade or Davenant; and there did not seem to be any danger. Moreover, I had all along been placed by circumstances in a position of hostility to McLeod, and I was reluctant to seem to oppose him again. And then the girl was importunate. She was evidently anxious to go with this man—— Oh, no, I read her well enough up to a point. She wanted to land anyhow, and she would have gone ashore with a

chimney-sweep. Her immediate emotions possessed her like a fire.

"If you will take two safe hands," I said, "I think you may go, but I shall get a wiggling."

She laughed joyously. "No. I'll make it all right with Captain Wade," she said with the confidence of youth. "He won't be angry."

I shrugged my shoulders whimsically. "Thanks," said McLeod, nodding, and hurried on deck.

I saw them push off a quarter of an hour later, and as the oars dipped in the silver water along that fairy pathway of the stars I was reassured as to the safety of the expedition. The island was plainly discernible, white shafts of light lying upon a wooded cliff. Light laughter drifted from the boat upon the nocturnal air.

At nine o'clock I heard the sound of a boat through the open porthole of my cabin, and I went on deck. The sky was now obscured with banks of clouds, but the night was pervaded by a dim luminosity. As I reached the gangway some figures were coming up the ladder, though I could not make out which they were. I expected my boat back by now, and I was looking anxiously for a woman's skirt. Then I heard Clifford's unmistakable voice.

"Cheese it, Byrne. You damn near had me over. Say, I want a drink badly."

So here was the captain back, and I was in for a reprimand. I confess I did not want to see him just then, for I had not anticipated his return before the others, and I knew enough of his nature to realise that

he would be far more angry, because McLeod had accompanied Miss Sylvester, than because I had allowed the expedition. I was in for it thus on two counts; and so I went below again, whither Byrne and Clifford had already gone. The popping of a cork sounded in my ears.

"Here's how," said the Irishman.

"Here's to success—success and treasure—my dear," said Clifford, winking over the bubbling glass.

"Herapath, have a drink."

I shook my head, but to be civil, asked: "How's the island?"

Clifford swore profusely. "It's all tommyrot," he said.

"What, the treasure?" said I.

"No; the island. 'Tisn't the island at all. The real island's farther on. We tumbled to that pretty quick when we got ashore. You've got to make tracks at once, old man. The old man's got his shirt out."

"The wrong island?" I exclaimed in astonishment, and then could not keep back a slight laugh. So this was the first-fruits of Halliday's expedition. Even his chart was wrong in the initial point.

"That's funny, ain't it?" said Clifford jocosely.

"It is funny," said I.

"I guess it's funnier than you know," he sneered.

Down the steps came the man Crashaw, with his bold eyes.

"Captain's compliments," said he, "and he would be obliged if you'd get up steam at once, sir."

"Where is the captain?" said I.

"In his cabin, changing, sir," said the man.

"Fell into a jolly old bog or backwater, or something," said the jovial Clifford. "Here, I'll trouble you for that bottle, my *fidus Achates*."

I went on deck, and almost ran into Davenant. "I hear the island's wrong," he said. "I didn't put much trust in that chart. We've got to march."

"Are you going on the bridge?" I asked. "How's your neuralgia?"

"Pretty bad still. I've got orders from Wade," he answered.

"Well, we can't go at once," said I, feeling now mighty uncomfortable.

"Why?" said he.

"The fact is Miss Sylvester and McLeod are ashore," I replied, feeling still more foolish.

"What?" he cried sharply in a voice that was new to me.

"I let 'em go. It was my fault. Now I've got to see Wade and explain."

"What the devil right had you to take that liberty?" he demanded in a voice of compressed fury.

I had been discomfited, but this was the sort of opposition I wanted.

"If it comes to that," I replied warmly, "I was in charge and I am answerable only to the captain."

He turned aside quickly and stood looking towards the island.

"This is damned awkward, Herapath," he said at last in another tone.

"I know it," I said. "I've got to stand the racket. And I'll go to Wade now."

"Wait a bit," he said. "I don't see why you should, after all, take all the blame. I was in authority. It's my affair. At any rate, let me see Wade."

"No," I replied. "Why should you? I don't mind facing the music. I'm responsible." And I swung about to go to Wade's cabin.

Davenant followed me.

"Better not," he urged. "Tell him later. I'll break the force of it."

"My dear Mr. Davenant," I said, "I am much obliged to you, but I never yet endeavoured to avoid the obligation of my own acts. Wade wants to steam off, and he can't, and I've got to explain why."

"All right, my dear sir," he assented, falling away all of a sudden to his old particularity of deportment, and vanished along the deck.

I knocked at Wade's door, but received no answer; then I knocked louder, but still got no reply. I remembered what Clifford had said about a bog, and I concluded that the captain was changing in his farther room. So I pushed open this door and entered his office. The door inside the sleeping-cabin stood open, and showed me an empty room.

I wondered if Wade had gone down to the saloon since I left it; and vaguely supposed he might even be on the bridge. But as he was evidently not in his cabin I left, and encountered the steward at the door.

"Is the captain about?" I asked.

"I think he's forward, sir," said Heaven.

I went forward, descending to the lower deck, where the hands were busy. Digby was there, whistle in hand, getting out the sail on the *Duncannon's* two masts.

"Where's the captain?" I asked.

He shook his head. "I don't know," he grumbled.

"Someone's made a mess of it. Not the island, eh? I thought Davenant didn't know as much as he lets on to."

"Davenant!" I echoed.

"Yes. He navigated us here, didn't he? And now we've got to up-anchor at this time of night."

The sound of the capstan had been audible for some time, and Digby, watching, issued an order as the anchor appeared in the bows.

"You don't know where Captain Wade is?" I asked.

"Haven't seen him since he came aboard," said Digby, turning away.

I resolved now to go down to the saloon in my search, and if that should be drawn blank, to seek Marley. But I had not gone far when a familiar noise greeted my ears, and under my feet rose a vibration. The engines had been started, and the screw was turning.

Uttering an exclamation I redoubled my steps, casting a glance through the darkness at the bridge, if so be I might make out Wade's figure there. I could only conclude that Collins had received his orders through the tube, and that the captain was in charge.

It was a most embarrassing situation, and I ran up the ladder precipitately with a renewal of my discomfiture. "Captain Wade!" I called. "Captain Wade!" And then I perceived that it was not Wade. A silent figure stood, wheel in hand, and near him was Davenant. "Davenant, what's this?" said I. "She's in motion, and there's that boat not arrived. Where's Wade?"

"Didn't you find him?" he asked. "I supposed it was all right. I haven't had any further orders."

"I can't find him," I said anxiously, "and the ship mustn't start till I do."

"I can't interfere with my orders," he said, shrugging his shoulders.

The propeller was moving fast, and we were forging ahead.

"But you must," I said desperately.

"My dear sir, don't talk nonsense," he said soothingly. "You know I'm bound to go on till Wade countermands his order."

"But," I said, "the girl is ashore with McLeod and two hands."

"It's very unfortunate," he said stiffly. "Better find Wade."

"Oh, well, it's no use dealing with a d——d pedant," I threw at him as I fled.

I rattled down to the deck. If Wade was not to be unearthed, at least I would get hold of Marley, and I hastened to his cabin. It was empty. And just here it was that I began to scent something. I could not

clearly think out what it was, for my brain was in too much of a whirl, but I knew I had a subconscious feeling of alarm. Neither Wade nor Marley was to be found, and the *Duncannon* was gathering speed. There was only one course to take, and I took it. I scurried into the engine-room, and stopped the engines. Collins, mopping his face with a greasy rag, looked at me questioningly.

"Something wrong," I said. "I can't say what. Who started you?"

"Mr. Davenant," said he.

The whistle blew on the speaking tube, and I took it up.

"What the devil's this?" demanded Davenant's voice. "What's gone wrong with your engines?"

"I stopped them," I said back.

"How the devil dare you?" he called in a fury. "You shall smart for this—damn you, it's insubordination."

His voice ceased, and I heard shouting on deck.

"See here, Collins," I said. "Don't you start her till I give orders. This is my affair. I sha'n't be long." I ran on deck. The *Duncannon*, her canvas spread fore and aft, was lumbering slowly away. Davenant, just visible on the bridge, stood with one arm lifted, shouting an order. From the saloon ascended a noise of singing.

"I've mided up my mind to sile awy—sile awy——"

It was the ribald hilarity of Byrne and Clifford, humorously disguised in a cockney accent. I went back.

Where was Halliday? I had seen nothing of him either. I met the slow-moving Carter near the entrance.

"Have you seen Captain Wade since he came aboard?" I asked.

"No, sir," he said after a pause.

"Mr. Marley?"

"No, sir," after another pause.

"Mr. Halliday?"

His pause was less this time, and he lowered his voice. "I never seed any of 'em come aboard," he said.

I sprang down to the engine-room, and reversed the levers.

"Back her," I said to Collins; "we're in Queer Street." The screw began to rumble, and the *Duncannon* struggled against her sails. The wind was drawing freely in them, but the screw was powerful enough to counteract them. Round she swung suddenly, with a loud report of a boom breaking. An outcry arose on deck. No message came through the tube. It was no time now for remonstrance and argument, or even for objurgation. It was war.

I heard the noise first, and almost had anticipated it. When I turned, halfway down the ladder was the man Crashaw, and behind him others, one or two of the foreigners in the crew.

"Captain Wade's orders, eh, Crashaw?" I said, grinning. He sprang down at that with an oath, and was followed by his friends. The space was restricted in that small engine-room, and Collins, who was nearer to him than I, dodged by the help of a rail. Crashaw

stumbled, and would have fallen, had not it been for the man behind who caught him.

"Mutiny! by heaven!" said I, and let my fist drive at him. It took the second man on his nose, and he went over into a corner, dragging Crashaw down with him. I advanced, and lunged right and left, and the men gave away.

"Strike him, you damn fool!" called out Crashaw; and in the mellay of bodies I saw a bare knife, though I could not say who had drawn it.

Crashaw rose now, and drew towards me, but kept out of range for the moment. A piece of iron struck me sidewise on the shoulder, and made me stagger, and at that there was a rush forward. I struck out with all my force, once, twice, three times, and cries arose from under the feet of the pack, who were playing football with their own wounded. But to this they were savagely indifferent, being now inflamed with the lust of fighting. A big black Italian made for me, marline-spike in hand, and simultaneously the knife gleamed—Crashaw was edging to the back of me. Then there was a hoarse scream of rage and pain, and the press gave. Yells and oaths ensued. I glanced to where Collins stood, armed with a syringe and a vessel of boiling water. The squirt played again upon their unprotected bodies, and they stampeded for the ladder.

"Bravo, man!" I panted. "Bravo!"

Those in the rear were scuttling up the ladder when from the grating above a voice rang out, thin but penetrating.

"What in God's name is this?" It was Davenant, staring down into the cockpit. "Herapath, you're running the boat on the island, man. Damn it, is this Bedlam?"

The men slunk past him. I stopped the engines, and leaned breathlessly over the railing. "A mutiny!" I panted. I climbed the ladder, and came face to face with him.

"Perhaps this situation can be explained," he said sarcastically.

"I don't know about that," I answered, trying to make out his face, which was like that of a sphinx. "I don't understand all this. I've told you how things stand. We can't leave that boat behind. And you fight me on the point."

"I?" he said, staring, and a dry smile passed over his face like a cat's-paw. "These men? I suppose I shall get at it presently, when you condescend to explain. Meanwhile, I've managed to get you to spare the ship. And meanwhile I want to know where Wade is."

"I don't believe he is on board," I said slowly.

He turned about sharply. "Are you serious?" he asked.

"I told you there was something aboard," I said. "And we've run up against the beginnings of a pretty tall plot, I guess."

"Come out of this, and let's talk," said he quickly, and led the way on deck.

The *Duncannon* was adrift, her sails backed, and only

a little way on her; and in the faint light the island was now more plainly visible. I heard in that moment a sound come in from sea, and went to the side.

"There's the boat," I said. The sound came up now as a hail. It challenged us, and the big port light of the *Duncannon* swung round as if in answer. Davenant stood beside me looking into the water, and presently something was dimly discernible upon it. It drew nearer, and then came alongside.

When Wade came up the side he was speechless with fury, white and dead of face. He handed Miss Sylvester aboard, and marched direct to his cabin.

"I'll see to this—I'll see to this," was all he said, in an expressionless voice.

Marley followed him. "This is the limit," he said as he passed me. "There'll be murder done."

"Clifford and Byrne?" I asked.

"The whole blamed crew," he returned. "It was a clear case of marooning."

Within two minutes we were in Wade's cabin, like schoolboys before a master. His high-coloured face was livid.

"Mr. Marley, make sail," he said formally in a hard, dry voice.

Marley hesitated. "Well, I'll have a shot for it," he said. "But what about these brutes——"

"Those are your orders," said Wade, and turned his glare on Davenant.

"I find the *Duncannon* up-anchored," he said sternly. "What's this?"

"I received instructions purporting to come from you, after the return of the boat," replied Davenant.

"From whom?" snapped Wade.

"Crashaw," he answered.

"Crashaw!" he echoed. "Crashaw gave instructions purporting to come from me?" He rang a bell, and issued a command to the sailor who answered. "Tell the boatswain to have Crashaw put in irons."

He was going to brave it out, to bluff his way through, though he must have known by now how precariously he stood. Was this hand also one of the mutineers? He saluted and left. Wade eyed us both.

"Listen," he said. "A deliberate attempt to maroon Mr. Halliday, Mr. Marley, and myself was made this evening. While we were absent on the island exploring the boat put off, and left us. If it had not been for the second boat——" he broke off. "Who sent the second boat?" he demanded.

"I gave permission to Dr. McLeod to take Miss Sylvester ashore," I replied. "There seemed to be no risk."

"I don't go into that, as it spoiled the plot," he said. "I want to know why you took authority from Crashaw, Mr. Davenant, to make sail."

"Well, I heard the boats had arrived," said the second officer, "and I naturally assumed you had come aboard. I was unfortunately lying down with bad neuralgia, and Mr. Herapath was in charge. And so, on Crashaw coming to me, I concluded the orders were all right, and I got up and made sail."

It sounded so easy and natural, yet I do not know if it was only his suave voice that irritated me.

"And you?" said Wade, abruptly to me.

I almost stammered. "Crashaw came to me too."

I saw Davenant's cat's-paw smile and felt furious. We were in the same boat, and we had both lent too ready an ear to this bold ruffian.

Wade looked contemptuous, but he had lost some of his white heat. "The first thing is to see how far this mutiny's gone," he said.

Marley here put his head in at the door. "I say, old man," he said, addressing me, "let the old kettle go, will you?"

"Damnation, Mr. Marley, what does this mean, sir?" cried Wade, his temper flaring up a sudden in an unexpected channel. "Do you suppose you are in a rancid taproom or a crimping-house?"

Marley looked at him good-naturedly enough. "No; but I reckon there's some putrid company aboard us," he grumbled. "That boat-load's gone."

"Gone!" echoed Wade.

"Yes; vamoosed, invisible—gone like rats to their holes."

"By God, this *is* mutiny," said Wade, drawing a long breath.

CHAPTER IX

THE DESERTION

"I THINK," said I as we looked at each other, "that perhaps Mr. Halliday ought to be here."

"That's so, Ned," said Wade, dropping of a sudden all his official manner. "Marley, let's have him in. This is shaping pretty badly, gentlemen."

"I don't seem to get the hang of it," said Davenant.

"We'll have it all out," said Wade drily, and said no more till Halliday arrived.

He had a restless, excited look, and carried himself uneasily.

"I was just taking a cup of coffee," he explained, "and then I was coming to consult with you, captain."

"We've got all our consulting cut out for us," said Wade curtly. "Let's figure out the facts first. Hera-path, start those engines, and Mr. Marley takes charge of the bridge."

I started them, handed them over to Collins, and returned.

"First," Wade was saying, "your chart's stolen; second, you're marooned. I'll guarantee it don't take long to get the connection between these two facts."

"You are sure about the marooning, captain?" asked Halliday, looking troubled.

"Sure!" he sniffed. "So sure you can sit down in

it. That boat was deliberately pulled back, and you and I and Marley were the intended victims."

"It's been very well organised," I interposed. "No sooner has the boat arrived without you than Mr. Davenant and I receive orders, supposed to come from the captain, just returned, to get the ship under way."

"That so?" said Halliday, staring.

"And when I refuse to get her going, because another boat is out, I am attacked and man-handled by a gang of mutineers——" Davenant's eyes had gone about to me, but I had not mentioned him. Wade exclaimed.

"What?" he called. Halliday's eyes bulged out.

"It's time we put it down as serious," I went on. "The object was clearly to get away from the island before you could make your escape by the boat which I had fortunately allowed ashore. Whoever is at the bottom of this will not stick at much. We had a narrow escape in the engine-room."

"By Jove!" exclaimed Davenant. "Was that it?"

"It means," said Wade bluffly, "that the parties at the back of this want this treasure of yours for themselves, and are not relying exactly on any signed documents."

"It spells all that, captain," said Halliday gravely. "It spells every word of that."

"And the question is, who are they?"

We looked at each other. "We've got Crashaw. He's in it clearly," said Davenant.

"As clearly McLeod isn't," I added. "We have done him an injustice. He is not the thief."

"Tick him off," said Wade. "That missing boatload's in it." His eyes caught mine. "We're bound to suspect everyone."

"Meanwhile, captain," said I, "there's no insubordination aboard now apparently. The deck's quiet. And we're running away from the island. I don't understand it. Why were you marooned?"

Wade grinned, his formality again lapsing. "It's a pretty good game, I take it, when considered all round. The inventor has a pretty turn for plotting. That wasn't the island."

"Not!" I exclaimed in surprise.

"Mr. Davenant," went on Wade, "I don't understand how you made that mistake."

"There was no mistake, sir," said Davenant. "The latitude and longitude were all right. You'll see to-morrow."

Wade reflected. "We'll see a good deal to-morrow, or I'm mistaken," he said.

Davenant displayed his cat's-paw smile. "I should say there was a strong tow off the island," he said. "We nearly backed into her."

He threw a glance across at me, but I said nothing. After all, what was the use of renewing an unpleasantness that was past? We had enough to do in facing the situation as it was, uncomplicated by differences between officers. He and I had both been victims, and the chief offender was in irons.

"They took it pretty easily," said Marley in relating his experience to us. "They looked on merely; perhaps it's not so bad as we thought."

If we were to judge by his conduct that was Wade's notion, for he got up presently, and reached for his cap.

"Now, about this missing crew," he said firmly.

"Better let it alone to-night," I suggested. I was not convinced, like Marley, of the mild temper of the mutineers.

"Let it alone!" he snorted. "Do you think I'm going to be browbeat on my own ship? I'll have that gang in irons."

Davenant adjusted his spectacles, and said nothing. Marley looked doubtful.

"I'd let sleeping dogs lie," he remarked.

"Very possibly you would, Mr. Marley," said Wade acidly. "But you're not captain of this ship."

He went out, and we followed. Digby's whistle gave the order for "all hands on deck," and they marshaled docilely enough.

"Hammond—Carsch——" Wade rang out the names. "Step forward!"

To this there was no response. The scene resembled the other scene earlier in the voyage. The same silence prevailed, but now somehow it seemed more ominous.

"Hammond, are you there?" called Wade. Silence answered him.

He repeated the other names, and still the ranks were mute. Wade's nostrils worked. I touched his arm.

This would serve no purpose, and I feared his precipitate temper.

"Get away," he said roughly, and leaned over. "You, Rogers, and you, Vasselli, take what is necessary, and go down into the saloon and arrest Mr. Byrne and Mr. Clifford."

There was a momentary hesitation on the part of the men, and then they fell out, and climbed the ladder to the upper deck.

"Wade, Wade!" I said in remonstrance. "You have no proof. They were not in charge of the boat. It was Crashaw."

"I'll have my way," he thundered. "We know they're the head and front of it. I'm master here, and, by God, they shall know it."

"A little bit of sugar for the bird," sang a voice behind, and Clifford emerged in the hands of Rogers. Immediately behind him followed Byrne in the other sailor's grasp. Broad grins adorned both countenances. "Am I agoing to walk the blooming plank?" inquired Clifford.

"What's the joke?" inquired Byrne.

"The joke," said Wade, "is this, that you are arrested by my orders for encouraging and participating in a mutiny."

"Mutiny! Great Scott!" cried Clifford. "Where's the adjective mutiny? We are getting quite interesting characters, Byrne, my boy."

Wade made a gesture with his hands, dismissing the prisoners with their guards, but Byrne asked bluntly:

"Are we to be put in irons?"

"Yes," said Wade. His anger had abated, and I don't think he was comfortable at the way his *coup* was being taken.

"Crikey!" said Clifford. "We shall perish in a dungeon. Never mind, old cock,

'Stone walls do not a prison make,
Nor iron bars a cage.'

Take it out of that, Byrne. We're blooming conspirators, we are. Off with their heads! So much for Buckingham! Where's the adjective Tower?"

They passed to the lower deck in this grotesque custody, ostentatiously marking time with heavy stamping, a cheerful pair of scoundrels. The whole thing was a farce, and now Wade must have recognised that.

"This treadmill work's awful, kind friends and Christians." Clifford's irrepressible voice came up to us. Wade's brow clouded, and he turned away abruptly. He had been worsted. But the lower deck was now quiet silent. All the indications were those of farce, not of tragedy.

It is not to be supposed that Miss Sylvester could be kept out of all this excitement. On the contrary, she was an interested witness. I had not spoken to her since her return, for she had been in her cabin, and I had been fully occupied. But after the curtain had fallen on this extravaganza, and outward quietude reigned, she came up to me.

"Oh, is it a mutiny really, Mr. Herapath?" she asked in excitement.

"I believe there are the makings of one," I said grimly, for I did not understand that lightness of temperament which would regard all events as staged for its enjoyment. She had a dozen questions to deliver, and a dozen fears and hopes to express. It was youth, irresponsible youth, and nothing more. Life *had* so far appeared to this girl as a drama which she could witness from the stalls. But life would assume other aspects for her some day, and as I talked I wondered if this very expedition was to be the occasion of her instruction.

She rambled on. "We were just putting off when Dr. McLeod said 'Hulloa, there!' as he heard a noise in the bushes; and then Captain Wade, and Mr. Marley, and Mr. Halliday burst through, and told us. Those wretched sailors had run away with their boat. Fancy! What do you suppose they wanted, Mr. Herapath? And why has Captain Wade arrested Mr. Byrne and Mr. Clifford? I hate Mr. Clifford, but that Irishman seems amusing. Oh, I should just think the island was lovely. Where are we going now?"

I told her that we were going to the *real* island, at which she remarked: "Fancy that not being the real island! But I never could tell how you sailors find your way on the sea from a little piece of paper and a compass. I don't mind how it's done so long as I get there."

She raised her sweet childish eyes to mine, and once

more I felt that I should not criticise her as if she were a grown woman. She had had some acquaintance with life, but no experience of it, and she was obviously as innocent as a kitten, and as simple-minded. She had almost forgotten that she was to get to Baltimore, and with it the loss of her wardrobe. She ate sweets that troubled night, and looked charming in the starlight, as we paced the deck. Wade had retired in dudgeon, and Davenant followed his example.

Marley had taken his place on the bridge. "This is a fine raree-show," he said as he passed me.

The big machine, that is a ship, was working noiselessly, placidly, and without the suggestion of a defect; the forecastle was still as a mouse. It was close on midnight when I turned in.

I was awakened by the splash of water in my face. The porthole in my cabin was always open save in rough weather, and at first I thought that the wind had got up and challenged the sea. Rising on my elbow I peered out. It was quite dark still, save for the stars, and I guessed that I had not been asleep more than an hour. The sea stretched calmly into the night. I put my head to the porthole, and then I heard voices.

They were voices pitched low, as if unwilling to be overheard, and they came from a boat which I could hear grinding and bumping against the side of the steamer quite near by. I got up, now fully alert and curious, and hastily dressing turned out into the saloon. At the top of the companion ladder I found the doors locked. Now, afire with suspicions, I roused McLeod,

and we tried the doors together, without avail. Back I went to my cabin, and looked out by the porthole. I could still hear the boat bumping, and the voices.

McLeod, who had taken his station at another porthole, came running to me.

"Man, they're making off," he said. "They're passing provisions over the side."

I nodded. "They're levanting," I said. "Get Davenant up, and I'll keep watch."

We roused Davenant, who joined us at once in a state of considerable excitement. Halliday's cabin was on deck, as was Wade's. We all watched. The light was too dim to make out much, but it was clear that the mutineers were going to desert the ship. With what object?

Suddenly our query was answered. Up till now we had not been sensible of the screw, but now we were made so, for it stopped. Every one knows that the only time the screw makes itself felt is when it ceases. It ceased now.

"By God," said McLeod suddenly, whacking his thigh in his tempestuous manner. "By God, I can guess. Here's the island! That's their little game."

"And they have the chart," said I.

We looked at each other.

Just then a noise came from the saloon, and I hurried in. The cessation of the propeller had wakened the Frenchman and Miss Sylvester.

"Is anything the matter? Oh, is it all right?" she cried; and through the half-opened door I could just

see her white-robed form, and the bronze hair about her face. It was the piteous cry of the child who has awoke to fright. I soothed her fears.

"Only that we've reached the island," I said.

"The island!" she exclaimed delightedly; and impulsively threw open the door and took one step forward. I knew she had forgotten everything in her delirium of delight. She had the supreme faculty of losing herself, her self-consciousness and all, in the intoxication of the moment's emotion.

"But it is dark, and you can see nothing, and I advise you strongly to finish your sleep," I said prosaically. She stopped; then remembered, and retired in a little pretty confusion. I rejoined the others, anxious now that something should be done.

"It's impossible to break down the doors," McLeod was saying. "Herapath and I tried."

"It's devilish sitting here and doing nothing," said Davenant restlessly. "If we could only get out we could soon bring them to their senses."

"Do you think so?" I asked. "I guess it's gone deeper than that. This is a big sore—it's gangrene."

He eyed me. "Why do you think so?" he inquired.

"Oh, symptoms," I said carelessly, for that was not what mattered just now. Our business was to get out of our prison and alarm Wade. Then an idea came to me. "If you'll hold on to my legs I think I can get through and climb up," I said.

McLeod's eyes took my measure. "You'll never get through with those shoulders," he said.

"I can manage it by edging and coaxing," I answered.

"Right!" he said suddenly, and pushed open the window farther.

I jerked myself upon the upper bunk, and put my head out of the porthole, taking the strong sea wind that stung in the nostrils fragrantly. Then I began carefully to wriggle. As McLeod had suggested, my shoulders were the difficulty. If I could get them through the long length of my limbs would clear the opening easily. I turned, rolled over, shifted and screwed one shoulder higher than the other, in the attempt to go out, as one extricates a table from a room—crosswise. I wrenched one arm halfway out, and then I stuck. My legs were shoved hard at me, as if McLeod and Davenant would ram and batter me out. I had the most uncomfortable sense in the world at that moment that I should never be released from that "jam." And then I put forward all my strength. If I was to be got free it might as well be on the outside as the inside. The sash bit into my flesh; my chest contracted painfully; there was a rip, and I was free——

I was more than free. I had overdone it, or at least my coadjutors had. As I went through I felt a tremendous thrust of my legs, and I shot out like a pellet, wildly flinging forth my arms. I was bound for the sea, beyond a doubt, and I struck it just slantwise below the porthole. The cold fresh salt of the sea rose to receive me, and I went down into that hospitable bosom.

When I rose again it was some distance away from the bow of the *Duncannon*, for which I struck out. The ship was adrift evidently, and was making for the island on a strong tide. When I reached her side I began to swim softly round, looking for some means of boarding her. The boat was forward now, and was still being loaded, as I could gather from the light on the bulwarks. Aft I hit upon a trailing rope, and by its assistance gained the deck unobserved. After a moment's pause to recover myself I made for the captain's cabin; I could make out the dim mass of the land on the starboard quarter.

Wade's door was locked, and his windows were barricaded from the outside. The mutineers had taken every precaution. He was a close and helpless prisoner. The jamb of the door, which opened inward, would effectually prevent Wade from breaking out, but it would not prevent me from breaking in. I put my shoulder to it steadily—the unbruised shoulder—and gradually pressed. It gave with some little cracking noise, and I heard Wade's voice:

“I am armed, and, by thunder, I'll fire.”

“It's me—Ned,” I called back to him in a whisper, and he exclaimed. I stepped through the ruins of the door, and pushed it to. “Have you a light? It won't be seen from the inner cabin.”

We felt our way there, and Wade struck a match and lit a lamp. “They're thorough,” he said grimly, indicating the barred window there also. “But it keeps our light from them.”

"We're barred in below too," I said; and I told him our adventures.

"It's a bigger business than I expected," he remarked quite coolly. "And now for action."

I pulled him roughly back, for he was on his way to the door. "Good Lord, man, what are you at? It's running on your own fate."

"Oh, they'll never go as far as that. Besides, I'm armed," he said bluffly.

"Won't they?" I returned. "Don't you depend on that. They've put their heads deep enough in the dock already, and they can't turn back. The odds are they'll go to the logical end of their recklessness now."

"Damn it, I can't do nothing," he said angrily; and then: "It's well organised. I wonder who's at the bottom. It can't be that drunken scoundrel Clifford."

"It might be Byrne," I said. "I don't seem to know much of him. How did they get you locked up?"

"I turned out at two bells, and was seized as I opened the door, and bound until they'd done this carpenter's job. Then they thrust me in, damn 'em."

He scowled, and looked at his pistol again. Just then a heavy splash sounded in our ears. "There's the anchor," said Wade. "That'll keep us off the shore anyway."

I went cautiously to the broken door, and peered out. The light was still in the rigging, but the boat had gone. I could hear the sounds of oars borne on the night air. I went back.

"They've gone," I told Wade. "Now we can do

something. Wade, there's poor Marley. What's come to him?"

"Damn it, he may be in it for all I know," he retorted savagely.

"No, he's not," said I; "and I'm going to look him up. Meanwhile you'd better do the same by Halliday."

I left him, and stole along the deck to the foot of the bridge without being challenged, and indeed without hearing any human sound. I ascended, and found Marley's body lying flat below the wheel. He was bound and gagged, and I released him. He sat up weakly.

"That you, old man?" he said in a dazed voice. "They landed me well. Great Scott, they socked it me hard!"

"What happened?"

"Why, this damned son of a gun at the wheel got me on the head, and I went down like a polled ox. I don't remember any more till I came to with this bridle on. Sakes, it aches!"

I helped him down, explaining the situation. It appeared that no sooner had Marley inaded the land than the mutineers acted. They delivered their blow at once and effectually; and now they were gone ashore with a large store of provisions and—the chart.

That was the point on which we had to fix our eyes, and we did. Wade had released Halliday, and went forward to make investigations, with his revolver in his hand, while I went to the saloon to free the others.

"After all," said Wade, "there must be some who

drew the line at mutiny, though I'm sure I couldn't guess who."

By the time I had broken into the saloon I heard his voice above calling on me.

"It's a bit better than we thought," he said when I had joined him. "There's some faithful hands yet. The forecastle was untenanted, but a knocking came from the men's quarters. Ten of 'em had been locked in—same old wheeze; they said they'd been awoke to hear hammering and to find Crashaw in charge."

"What, is that beast free?" said Marley.

"What do you think?" returned Wade. "I don't believe they put up any fight. They look as mild as milk. God! It's sickening! Well, Mr. Halliday, this is a nice 'bean feast.'" He broke off to greet the American, whose eyes were unnaturally lighted, and who had something in his hand.

"I've brought this duplicate I drew up myself," he said, "and I reckon, captain, you can make up with it."

"It's a bit late in the day," said Wade carelessly, but he looked at the map which Halliday unfolded. "Now, my dear sir," he said with studied sarcasm, "why the devil didn't you trot this out at the beginning? We shouldn't have tumbled into the wrong island, and I reckon we should have had a good chance of being out of the present dilemma."

"I didn't exactly guess that those markings signified anything particular," said Halliday deprecatingly; and went on in another vein: "But say, captain, don't

you get it into your head that I'm low-spirited any, because I ain't—not by a long way."

"I don't know about you," said Wade shortly. "But I'd like to see what's raising your spirits in the situation. These men have gone off with your map to find your treasure."

"We've got to stop that, captain," said this pronounced optimist, earnestly admonishing him. "Captain, we've just got to head 'em off right away."

Wade looked at him steadily, as if he would retort on him sharply, and then I believe something in the case appealed to his own reckless nature. At all events, he grinned, and at last burst out into a laugh.

"Damn it all—we will, Halliday," he observed. "I'm hanged if we won't. Let's have a look at that map again."

And there in the cabin with the shattered door our conference gathered about the chart,¹ which had been the cause of our extraordinary expedition, and which now seemed to have caused the wreck of that expedition.

"Aim," said Wade, laconic now, "is to get at this spot, Devil's Pulpit, marked with a cross, before the mutineers. It's dark; the coast is unknown; the markings on the map are few, and may be guesswork. They're the work of an unskilled hand. The job's risky. But you've your choice, Mr. Halliday."

¹ A facsimile of this map as copied by Halliday is given as a frontispiece, with certain omissions and additions I have considered necessary. The original map was never regained.

"There's no choice, sir," said the American with shining eyes. "We're after them."

"Good!" said Wade. "Then we've no time to waste. Have a boat lowered, Mr. Davenant."

When Wade acted, he acted promptly, and within twenty minutes the boat was provisioned, and we were taking our places. The hands watched us with some curiosity, but said nothing. There were ten of them, including my friend Carter, and we had in addition Collins for our party. When we reckoned up our numbers we stood thus—the mutineers comprised Byrne, Clifford, Crashaw, and fifteen men; on our side were Halliday, Wade, Marley, Davenant, Digby, McLeod, myself, Collins, and ten others. That made us exactly even in strength, but they had the advantage of the start, and doubtless they were well equipped. It was impossible to leave the *Duncannon* deserted, and so we picked our crew. Wade decided that six of the men should remain aboard, under the charge of Digby, who had with him a quartermaster, one Edwards, with a black moustache and imperial. The rest of us were to rush the position.

"What's that you've got?" demanded Davenant as I packed a case away in the rear of the boat.

"Firearms," I answered.

"What, you don't suppose there'll be any of that sort of thing?" he said in surprise.

"One never knows," I answered. "Better be safe than sorry."

"Well, it looks like putting a premium on manslaughter," he protested.

I said nothing, for my ears heard a sound through the noises and voices, and I turned my head and peered through the darkness; but under the loom of the hull it was impenetrable. Yet there seemed to be lurking a shadow in the stern.

“Give way,” said Wade; and we shot out. But I still stared, for the sound I had heard behind me was the rustle of skirts. The shadow still lurked in the stern.

CHAPTER X

NIGHT ON THE ISLAND

THE boat settled into silence soon, save for the regular dip of the oars, and Wade's voice at intervals raised in instructions. The shadows worked about that deeper shadow which I suspected; but I said nothing, for it would have been useless now. If the girl had been so mad as to come ashore it was her own fault. And yet I could not be hard on her, ignorant of the issues as she was, and so full of life and spirit. She had stowed herself away like a mischievous boy, and now lay quiet as a mouse.

The wind was cool and brisk, and sang in the ears, as the sailors sent the boat merrily along into the teeth of it. I felt chill, and even as I felt so I put out my arm backward, with a protective design which was almost instinctive, to see if she were cold. My hand touched a body warm with the racing blood, and then fingers stole into mine and pressed them; I think she meant to plead with me for herself, to implore my assistance, to deprecate my anger. It was the act of a child who has been a little frightened by her own boldness. Yet I will confess that I thrilled unexpectedly to the pressure of those delicate fingers. I thrilled, and I let my hand rest there. She may have taken this as a sign that she was forgiven, and that I would stand by

her. At any rate, her hand remained in mine, passive now, as if she were content.

The stars emerged again from the wrack shortly afterwards, and I could see her where she lay, crouched against the boat, and enveloped in a dark cloak which she had obtained. In the distance now the heights of the island could be seen. Wade stood up, peering ahead for the foreshore, and made a signal presently. The boat turned her nose and marched on a new tack, and for some little time the heights did not emerge more distinctly. Consequently it was clear that we must be keeping a parallel course, or in other words, must be skirting the shore. A bluff of land rose dimly out of the darkness, and slowly dropped into it again; and Wade now issued another order. With the helm up, the boat began to move slowly inwards; ten minutes afterwards she grounded peacefully on a pebble beach.

We were, so far as we could make out, in a small cove, with bluff cliffs to either side. Indeed, subsequently we discovered that the little bay was almost land-locked, and formed a comfortable, and secure, if diminutive, harbour. With the aid of a lantern Wade and Marley examined the chart at once, and came to the conclusion that we had landed on the east side of the island in one of the tiny inlets indicated by the broken coast-line. It was not, of course, possible for us to determine at which point the first boat had made the shore, but we could only hope that it was farther from our common objective than we were. As for that, it was plainly marked on Halliday's map, a rude cross in red ink

under the words "Devil's Pulpit," from which a stream appeared to arise, as will be seen on reference to the reproduction of the chart. Marley reckoned that it should lie due west of us, and accordingly we prepared to direct our course that way.

But when we came to unload the boat the inevitable discovery was made.

"The lady's there, sir," gasped one of the seamen.

"What's that?" said Wade sharply, and went forward. He had two moods, and I thought I knew which possessed him then. I took his arm as he passed.

"I think the poor girl's sick of being cooped up, Mark," I said.

"Lady's man, eh?" he said shortly. "You've mistaken your occupation—should have been a curate, Ned."

"It's no affair of mine," I said sharply. "Do what you will. But we've no time to send her back."

He boarded the boat again, and I heard him call out, "Now, this is very foolish, Miss Sylvester"; but I guessed from his tone that he had changed his mind. It was a reckless expedition, and one madman (or madwoman) the more did not matter.

It had been arranged that we were to beach and conceal the boat, which we did under overhanging bushes, make a cache of some of the provisions, and march with the balance. We required speed, as Wade impressed on us, and at that he turned to the girl.

"I'm afraid you won't like it," he said tenderly.

"I can walk as well as anyone," she declared, having

now fully recovered her assurance. "And oh, it will be romantic!"

I wondered if it would be more than romantic; but Wade laughed, and gave the order to start; and so we set out, a little band with high hopes and some misgivings, on our venture. We were eleven in all, including Miss Sylvester, and the mutineers were eighteen. But we were relying upon craft rather than strength or numbers. It was reckoned to be five miles to the place where the treasure was hidden, and if we were fortunate we should reach it in two hours; if we had no luck—well, it might be dawn, if we ever reached it. Great things were thus depending on this hazard, as some of us felt while we climbed up from the cove.

For the sea came in softly here upon a beach of white and broken shells, through which a small stream gurgled down a little coomb. Up this we proceeded, and when it ceased at its source, a bubbling spring in the face of a hillside, we began to creep up that hill, which was sparsely clothed with bushes and trees. There was, of course, no pathway, and we were obliged to make our own direction, which was easy enough at first. But on reaching the upper slopes of the hill we were confronted by a heavy wood, luxuriant and embarrassing with undergrowth. Through this we needs must cut and hack and break our way very painfully. I was in the van with a huge axe which we had brought for some such emergency, and the sailor, Carter, followed close on my heels, clearing up the road I hewed. Wade came next, and after him Miss Sylvester and

McLeod, who had managed to keep close to her. Necessarily our progress was very slow, and we rested at intervals. Sometimes one of the sailors or Wade himself relieved me, and on one of these occasions I had Miss Sylvester for company. She was excited, and full of questions, which she discharged alternately at McLeod and myself. Once we came to a pause in a little clearing in a descent which appeared to lead downward to the sea, while Wade inspected the map and the compass.

"This is a ticklish place," said he; "we're on a ridge, and have got to keep it. If we go down anywhere we'll find ourselves in one of the coves as like as not."

Davenant took the chart and the compass and examined them eagerly. It was then that McLeod pushed by me rather brusquely. He had practically spoken to no one save myself since his disgrace, and since Wade had returned him the blow they had ignored each other.

"See here, Captain Wade," he said with some vehemence. "I'm not going to let this go on. You owe me an apology."

Wade regarded him coldly. "Why?" he asked.

"You called me a thief," McLeod burst forth.

"That you are here is, I think, good evidence that we don't think you that," said Wade easily. "You were ironed for something else. I thought we'd settled all that."

McLeod looked round, and he wore now a sheepish look.

"I'm bound to say I did take that key," he said.

"Clifford put me up to it. But it was lying on the table. I just borrowed it."

"I see," I cried. "That was astute of the real thief. It averted suspicion, and threw it on you. The bureau was broken into, the documents stolen, and the key thrown on the table to tempt you. That was cute."

"A smart trick," said Davenant.

"There's a long score to settle with Messrs. Byrne and Clifford," said Wade. "Let's get along. Dr. McLeod, I think we'll cry quits all round, but I'm not going to sea with you again."

"Damned if I want you to," growled the irritable Scot.

That journey was beset with difficulties on which we had not reckoned. Not only was the forest almost impervious, so that we were obliged to cut each step for ourselves, but it was broken underfoot, descended into gullies, and mounted heights. The scrub of the undergrowth was sharp, and tore our clothes and lacerated our flesh. Moreover, on our other troubles was superimposed the darkness. The stars were invisible in the tangle of the wood, which was impenetrable to the eye. Night enveloped us, black, occult night, through which we stumbled on our way to an unknown goal at the guidance of a piece of paper for which there was no warrant. It was sheer madness; but we were committed to the enterprise, and I think that we all by this time, had been inflamed to the fever-heat of war. That night must have tried Miss Sylvester sorely, but she showed desperate pluck, and never murmured or com-

plained. One or other of us was continually offering her assistance, which she accepted very charmingly and simply, as a child is helped over a stile or across a brook. She breathed deeply in the night, and I heard her respirations when we halted once for further consultation.

"Shall we be there soon?" she asked me.

"I hope so," I returned.

"And where is there?" she pursued, with a little laugh.

"No one knows," I said. "But it is quite certain that wherever it is, Miss Sylvester should not in wisdom be there."

"Don't be angry," she coaxed. "I simply could not have borne to stay aboard."

"There is your uncle," I said.

"Uncle—uncle's—I don't know. He's been very odd lately. He's been so restless. Do you know—I suppose I oughtn't to say it—but we've never got on very well together. I've never understood him. I know he's very clever, a great financier, and all that. But—you see I was very fond of my aunt, who married him. And uncle has all my money invested, and—oh, I shall be so glad to get to New York again, and see all the old places. Do you think I'll find it changed much?" she asked wistfully, but rattled on when I had answered in a vivacious mood. Though she was dog-tired, her spirit was buoyant. "Oh, it's just lovely to think I'm in a real adventure like this, with mutineers and all. I've often read of it, but I never thought I should live

it like this. I should love to live romance. I've never had any—only luxuries, Mr. Herapath. I don't want luxuries; I want—romance."

To my mind she was likely to get as much adventure here as was good for her, but I could not answer for the romance. I pitied her simplicity, in the quaint phraseology of the old hymn. It was touching. But presently the saddle on which we were moving began to narrow, so that we were forced uncomfortably to keep our position on a sharpening ridge; and next the forest fell abruptly away on the south, and disclosed a sheer height of precipice in front of us. It was impossible to maintain our course as we had been doing, and there remained the alternatives of descent southward into the wooded lower ground, or of a passage along the precipice. In view of the fact that darkness would make the latter course dangerous, we decided to go down, the more readily that we had no certainty of reaching our destination by one way sooner than the other.

The descent was less arduous than our previous course, for the trees grew less intimately together. The plexus was not nearly so intricate; and as the way was downward we pushed on with better heart. Nevertheless, we were fairly exhausted when we had got once more to the level ground and found the afforestation still sparse. Here a halt was called to rest, for what with the picks we were carrying and the struggle through the jungle all had come to the end of their resources. Wade was now expressing annoyance that

we had been obliged to come down so far. "It would have been better for us to have landed south, and made up by this creek they mark," he said.

"Beggars can't be choosers," I said philosophically. "It is all in the night's work."

I threw off my pack, and lay with my face to the blind heaven, in which the stars were faint. The breeze was off the land, and rustled the leaves around us on its way to the sea, which beat at no great distance on the beaches. Then, moved by a sudden impulse, I arose, and began to walk away. I passed a dim figure, and heard my name.

"Mr. Herapath!"

Poor child, she was lying prone, with her face likewise to the stars; but she stirred a little as she called, and I could see her pull the skirts about her ankles.

"Where are you going?" she asked.

"I'm like that evil spirit that went to and fro," I told her, in the hopes of brightening her. "I am restless, if weary, and adventures are to the adventurous. Suppose I should hit upon a short cut for us all?"

She got to her feet at once. "Do let me come," she urged. "I'm not really tired. I should love to. Oh, what do you think we'll find?"

"I think you are a dear silly," I said, treating her as a child. "But if you've really strength in your legs, come along. I'm only going to see if the stream which is marked on the map is over here. We can't be far off."

She walked by my side alertly, as if to bear out her words, and together we proceeded two hundred paces westward. The trees being few and far between this was no long business. But we failed to come upon the stream; and so I northered a little, making a nor'-nor'-west course. After three hundred yards more the wood thickened, and I would have turned back at that moment if my ears had not been arrested by a sound. It was a voice, distant, but unmistakably a voice. I put my hand quickly upon my companion's to keep her silent, and listened. Now I got the direction, and still enjoining silence on her I turned, and we made softly through the wood. Five minutes afterwards we all but walked into the stream.

It was some twenty feet across, as I guessed, and ran swiftly in its short course betwixt the hills of that island and the sea. The voice I had heard undoubtedly had drifted to us from the other side, and I was determined to cross and investigate.

"Do you mind being left?" I asked in a low voice. "I must find out what they're doing. You will be safe here."

She hesitated, and then, "No; don't bother about me," she whispered back.

I pressed her hand in thanks, and plunged into the water. It came well up to my thighs, it was amazingly rapid, and it almost took me off my feet. However, I blundered through the boulders on the bed to the other side, and entered that farther fastness of wood. Immediately afterwards I saw a light, and I lay low.

Someone came up through the trees swinging a lantern, and then a voice called from the distance in unmistakable tones:

"Great Cæsar's ghost, draw it mild, Crashaw! We ain't a blooming motor car."

Here was news. At Clifford's words the man with the lantern paused, swung round on his heel, and seemed about to say something. Instead, however, he started to pick his way again through the wood. It was Crashaw. He was coming in a direct line for me, where I skulked behind a bush, his lantern a gleaming jewel in the night, a Cyclopean eye that blinked and menaced. I could hear voices back in the distance. It was a case of follow-my-leader; and evidently the mutineers had had, like ourselves, a hard fight upward.

The idea reached me almost as the man did. I stepped out, struck him heavily on the temple, and he fell in a clumsy heap, the lantern clashing to the ground. This I picked up at once, and hastily relit, for it was as a will-o'-the-wisp I wanted it, and there was no time to lose if I was to carry out the deception successfully. And next, there was Crashaw's body. I had hit hard, and he was not likely to regain his senses for some time; and when he did he would find some difficulty in making out the situation. At all events, I had to risk it now. I took hold of him! as I did so I heard a whispering voice, tremulous with fear and emotion:

"Is—is he dead?"

It was Miss Sylvester, who had followed me. There

was no time to remonstrate with her. I had business of more importance on hand.

"No," I said abruptly, and I carried the inert body among the bushes in which I had hidden.

"Crashaw!" yelled out Clifford, and he was now at close quarters. "Where in Halifax are you?"

For answer I waved the lantern above my head.

"Oh, how could you do it?" asked Miss Sylvester tragically.

"Child, you mustn't meddle in this," I said hastily. "He's only stunned. I told you you were not fit for this. It's man's work. Please go back before they come, and tell the others to make haste up the stream."

"No," she said. "I'm not afraid. If he's not dead—you mustn't be left alone."

I could have laughed in other circumstances at the thought that her company could be of assistance to me. But as it was, I was touched.

"Come then," I said. "Walk ahead of me, and keep within earshot. This is madness, but we're all mad."

She obeyed me without a word, and I directed her in a low voice. We swung round in a curve away from the stream. From behind the following voices reached us at intervals.

For half-an-hour I kept this course until we were on much lower ground, and, as I guessed, somewhere to the western side of the island, but still among woods. My companion for all her weariness walked with unflagging spirit, and though she sometimes cast a glance back at me she had never once questioned my directions or com-

mented on them. We were in the position of leaders of a file which straggled away a hundred yards or more, and by this time it was apparent that some of them had grown impatient.

"Is this your three miles, blimee?" demanded Clifford wrathfully out of the darkness. "Whoa there, Crashaw! Give pause! Help! I ain't a blooming mowing machine, and I can't get through this undergrowth."

I paid no heed to this; but presently another voice hailed me.

"We'll be having a rest now, Crashaw. Wait a bit." It was Byrne; but I dared not wait. I swung the light about, as if to indicate I had heard, and then I put it out. Now I could see the girl's figure more plainly in front of me, and I called to her in a whisper. She came back.

"We've done all we can now. We'd better turn in our tracks," I said. "I'm afraid you're tired."

"Yes," she assented; "but I'm glad. How far away are we?"

I told her, adding that we might be obliged to cover a greater distance owing to my rough reckoning and the darkness. We stepped noiselessly away, and made a detour upward to avoid the resting mutineers. Having skirted them safely we started eastward at a steady pace. My second wind had come to me, and I drew breath freely and without discomfort as I strode, but I feared for the girl. The way had been rough, and she was very silent. Twice she stumbled at my side,

and a third time was falling, with her foot in a hole, when I caught her. She had lost control of her steps. I put an arm about her.

"Brave girl!" I said. "Your soul goes marching on."

"I'm glad you think that," she said with a flash of spirit. "It does—it does." She paused. "But oh, I'm so tired," she bleated pathetically.

I did not say "I told you so"; but I acted. I pressed the arm closer about her, and she leaned against me like a weary child. With a swing I had her on my back, at which she gave a little astonished cry, and was then silent. She rested there, supported by my hip, without a struggle, no doubt enjoying the relief of her muscles. She did not weigh heavily, and in any case I felt I could have supported a heavier burden just then, and have carried it farther. Once she murmured in my ear:

"How strong you are!" And another time in a tired voice: "How kind you are!"

My march continued steadily over the broken ground and through the lessening forest. With any luck, I reflected, our party would have reached the Devil's Pulpit—whatever that might be—half-an-hour ago. In the dimness of the obscure night we came out of a thicket upon the little river, which bubbled merrily on its way to the sea, and Miss Sylvester wriggled on my shoulder. I interpreted her sign, and set her down.

"Thank you, ever so much," she said, smiling at me. "I feel myself now."

"Let me take you across first," I said.

"How do you suppose I crossed before?" she asked.

"Oh, you—you walked through, didn't you?"

She laughed. "Yes," she said demurely. "But, Mr. Herapath, you must remember my limited wardrobe. I can't afford to take risks. So I crossed in the proper way; and I'm going to do so again."

She had sat down, and begun to take off her boots, and I sat down also and waited.

"I could carry you," I reminded her.

"Oh, but it will be just delicious in the water—so refreshing," she declared.

I had my doubts of the torrent. It had been fairly shallow where I crossed, but it had broken against me with considerable force. But I had come to recognise her wilfulness. She put her boots and stockings about her neck, and pinned up her skirts.

"I'm going to enjoy this," she said as she waded in, and squealed "Oh!" as the cold water struck home. "Delicious!" she exclaimed.

I went in after her. It was only some twenty feet to the farther side, but there were rough boulders in the bed. She walked in a careful gingerly fashion, a pretty shadowy figure in the twilight. Then she trod on a stone, and lurched forward, and of a sudden the roaring stream was waist-high, and she fell with a startled cry. The torrent had dashed her a dozen feet away ere I could seize her, and then I held her up dripping. "Oh!" she gasped. "What a fool I am! You'll be sick of such a fool."

We got out, and I squeezed the water from her skirt, while she laughed on lugubriously.

"My whole wardrobe," she said pathetically.

"Now, I'm afraid you must walk," I said, "or you'll catch cold."

"My teeth are beginning to chatter," she confessed, and mournfully put on her soaking boots. I don't think she remembered at that moment that I carried her stockings. She was a pitiful little figure; but she strode manfully in my wake as we passed upward. Ten minutes later I was brought up by what seemed to be a dense growth of scrub. I followed along it towards the stream, but it descended to the verge, and I was not in the mind to plunge through the chill water again. So I moved in the other direction; but the scrub continued, offering an impenetrable and continuous front.

"Are we nearly there?" Miss Sylvester's voice assailed me. Then there was another voice.

"Who goes there? Halt, or I fire."

I recognised it; it was Marley's. I called back: "It's Herapath."

A face emerged over the thicket of scrub, but was not recognisable in the light.

"You, old man?" said Marley. "What the blessed potato have you been up to?"

"I'll tell you presently," said I. "What's this?"

"This is our blooming zariba," he said triumphantly.

"Come along in."

"What is it?" demanded Miss Sylvester, forgetting her misfortune in her interest.

"It's a fortification. They've made a wall of scrub and brushwood," I said, taking it all in suddenly.

"A fortification!" she cried. "But why?"

"Because, my dear child," I said, "this is war, and the campaign is opening."

CHAPTER XI

MARK'S WAY

MARLEY held a lantern, which he swung in Miss Sylvester's face as I assisted her over the barrier.

"Well, I'm staggered!" he remarked. "Anything happened to you? Get lost?"

I told him succinctly the story of our wanderings, and he whistled. "By Jove, old man, we owe you one. That's why we come to be here then."

"I'd like to know exactly where here is," I said.

"Blamed if we know ourselves," he replied. "All we do know is that we followed the river up till we were stopped by a precipice, and we guess that that's the Devil's Pulpit."

"You've got some food?" I asked. "Miss Sylvester is worn out and exhausted."

"She's a brick," he said admiringly. "Oh, there's lots of grub. Wade's getting a sleep. We ran this zariba up pretty smart, eh?"

I complimented him, and he led the way to a shelter which had been erected in the umbrage of a great tree, as I could make out.

"They're not bad quarters," he observed. "Plenty of room anyway, and lots of water down there. Depends on what turns up. This is meant for Miss

Sylvester. Wade had it fixed himself. I say, old man, he's in a mighty wax with you."

"Never mind," said I. "It was worth it."

The reply perhaps was ambiguous. Marley stood regarding the girl abstractedly, and without self-consciousness, as was his wont, and if she had not been dog-tired she might have felt embarrassed. In the light of his own lantern he looked yellow and lank of face. His eyes were preternaturally wide.

"Well, I must be getting some food for you," he said, and walked away. "It's my watch," he called back. He was disjointed in his remarks, and somewhat strange. I introduced Miss Sylvester into her improvised hut, and she sank on the couch of fern which the thoughtfulness of someone had raised for her.

"Oh, this is heavenly," she sighed. "It's better than any ballrooms or theatres or anything of that sort. It's divine just to feel tired, Mr. Herapath, and have all this fine air, and the stars and the growing light."

"My dear lady," said I, "what about your wet clothes?"

"Oh, you have no romance," she said, with a laugh, and sat up. "It certainly is serious. I've no change. Oh, but here's my cloak, which someone has kindly brought along. Mr. Herapath," she added with playful demureness, "do you think that if we stay here like Robinson Crusoe we shall be able to make our own clothes out of skins and bark and things?"

"We'll do our best," I said lightly, as Marley returned, bringing biscuits and tins.

"Now set to," he said. "You ought to be peckish."

We ate while we talked, and Miss Sylvester, who had recovered her gaiety, laughed at intervals. "It is so exciting," she cried, but presently yawned a little behind a dainty hand. Sleep would, I knew, make swift decent upon that volatile spirit. Marley and I bade her good-night.

The camp was wrapped in silence, but in the grey light the figures of Marley's two sentries could be seen, one on the side of the stream, and the other facing the wood.

"We're all right for the present then," he remarked, "and I'm infernally glad. Gad, the blighters are t'other side of the island. I never cottoned to that fellow Clifford," he said pensively. "Lord, I shall be glad when my turn comes. I could sleep—I think I could."

He looked drowsy, and something more.

"Let me take your watch," said I.

"No; thank you, old man, all the same," he replied. "I'll manage all right. It's been a bit tiring. But Davenant comes on presently. I'm all right."

He set down his lantern, and blew it out, for the light was steadily growing. Then he sat down by it under the barrier of scrub, and began to talk disconnectedly. Ten minutes later he was asleep, with his head against the zariba. I let him sleep, and remained by him in silence. Slowly the eastern sky brightened, and the dawn was about us. Mists hung about the sea, but the

hills above us now took form and substance. I had for some time a sense of something menacing, or something imminent and impending. It was a curious physical sensation of being within the influence of some alien thing. And now the explanation forced itself upon me. Out of the night with its faded stars grew a great shadow; it built itself obscurely above me, and then gradually materialised into substance. And the shafts of the early dawn illumined a pillar of rock that rose from the fringe of the camp and towered to heaven above us.

I recognised it at once from the name on the chart, and the curious appropriateness of its style struck me; for the precipice had a strange resemblance to a gigantic pulpit. The rising ground of the island here reached its climax in a wooded peak some thousand feet high. But on this southern side the face had fallen away suddenly, and the descent was abrupt and precipitous. The stream ran in a lather of foam out of a small cañon between two naked cliffs of rock, and upon one side the *arrête* was formidable. The bare wall ascended sheer from the outskirts of the camp some five hundred feet. Then it curled over in a lip, forming a ledge which appeared from below to be of some size. Above this again the wall resumed until the top of the hill was gained, and here it once more turned and hung over the valley. Thus the two ledges projecting over one space gave to the precipice, as I have said, its odd likeness to an old-fashioned pulpit.

So far then the tale was true, the mad, wild story

which had been pieced together from the gossip of a countryside, the rambling words of a dying man, and from an unauthenticated chart, by the enthusiasm of an idealist. Events had justified Halliday's faith up to this point. The island was here, and here was the site of the treasure trove. The question to be answered now was, was the treasure there? As I gazed upward I reflected that this eyrie in which the possessors had chosen to conceal it was almost in itself a corroboration of the story. The sun emerged from the mists on the water, and the young rays dashed the face of the cliff with fire. Somehow I was strangely stirred. The camp was enshrouded in silence, and lay dark beneath that glory; and I craned my neck and gazed.

The sound of feet aroused me. I came back to earth, and saw Davenant. He was some distance away, and his back was towards me. He too was looking upward. I called to him, and he started.

"You gave me a shock. I thought you'd disappeared," he said; and his glance fell on Marley, still slumbering at my feet.

"I'm afraid he's ill," I said.

He bent and examined him. "Something wrong there," he observed. "I don't like his looks. Let's cart him inside."

We lifted the sleeping man, who grunted, but did not wake, and carried him to his tent. The sleep was not natural; it looked, I thought, like a lesion of the brain. Davenant went out to take his watch, and I was just going to turn in when I heard a voice across the stream.

I hurried down to the edge of the zariba, whither Davenant had already preceded me.

"Hear anything?" I inquired.

"Yes; it's them right enough." He looked puzzled. "I can't make out why they weren't here before."

"Oh, I forgot I hadn't told you," I said, and told him.

He stared at me through his glasses. "That's smart," he said. "However, here they are."

"But we're in possession," I declared.

"Oh yes, we're in possession," he shrugged his shoulders; "if you call that possession." He pointed at the precipice.

Across the water figures emerged. The sun streamed freshly over Clifford's purple face, lighting it up. I shrank back so as not to be seen, but Davenant remained.

"It's only fair to give you notice," he called in his neat voice, "that we will allow no one to cross this side of the river."

Clifford and the others of his party who had arrived turned their eyes on him, and for a moment there was silence. Then Clifford spoke.

"Great jujubes, he's got a bally fort, has Mister Wade. He's protecting his picaninnies, is Mister Wade. He's the father of his flock, is Mister Wade. All right, governor, don't shoot, and we'll come down. Anyone got a drink?" he asked of his companions. "I could drink a brewery. Byrne, you blighter, got a drink?"

The bushes rustled on the other side, and the party disappeared. It was not a very dramatic opening; indeed, it was rather mild. But I had no objection to offer on that score. Davenant turned to me.

"It's all right. They've got no stomach for anything just now. They're pretty well winded, thanks to you. Better turn in. You must be worn out. I'll fix things up."

I took his advice, and was soon sound asleep, nor did I wake until the sun was well up, and there was the report of gunfire in my ears. I hurried out, and found the whole camp up and stirring. The sun was on the summits of the hills, and white upon the face of the precipice.

"What's the matter?" I asked the first man I met, Carter, who was handling a revolver in a slow mechanical way.

"They're firing at the cliff, sir," he said.

"Who are firing?" I asked impatiently.

"The other chaps," he said.

I ran down to the water's edge, and stared across. The land rose a little, a hundred paces from the stream, into a small bush-crowned knoll, and from this I saw a puff of smoke emerge. There was a report, and a splinter fell from the rock in our rear.

"Damn bad marksmanship," ejaculated McLeod near me.

"Say, captain, hadn't we better take shelter?" asked Halliday, who was as restless as a cat on hot plates.

Wade, whom my eyes picked out now, did not move or answer. He was watching the mound across the stream.

"Now what the deuce does this mean?" he said presently in a puzzled voice.

"Can't you see?" said I. "There's a man with brains there, and I don't know who it is. They're not going to attack us. Oh dear, no! They've started a shooting range; that's all. No one can complain of that. In fact; it's a sort of patriotic training. Only their range happens to be athwart our objective, which is a nuisance for us."

"You mean——" he said, whipping round to look at the cliff. He was in full view of the mutineers, drawn to his full stature, an easy mark. Crack! A rifle rang out at that moment, and a sprinkle of dust rose under the Devil's Pulpit. "I believe you're right, Ned," he said excitedly. "Anyway, we'll test it."

He marched to the edge of the zariba, and climbed over. I called to him to come back; but he paid no heed, and stalked across the open space between us and the base of the precipice. He had gone no farther than a dozen yards when there broke out from the knoll a splutter of rifle fire, and patches of dust leapt from the wall. Wade turned, halted, and looked back. Then he rejoined us.

"Correct!" he said laconically, dusting his hands. "That's one to you, Ned; and that reminds me, by the Lord, Mr. Herapath, what in blazes did you mean by decamping last night? It's as near a thing to mutiny

as I know next to that." He indicated the mound with his hand.

"I cry you mercy," I said. "It was an accident, and I couldn't resist the temptation." And I told him what had happened.

"That's all very well," he said, not so much mollified as I had anticipated. "But you must get this into your noddle—that orders must be obeyed. We can't afford to break up our bundle of faggots, so as to be destroyed in detail. And then Miss Sylvester—damn it, man, you ought to have had more sense."

"All right," said I in good humour. "I'll take it to heart. But I wish you'd see Marley. I think he's in for something."

"We're all in for something," he muttered as he turned off.

Marley was dozing when we entered, and he looked up at us in a dazed way.

"By God, old chap, this is a bit thick," he murmured vacuously.

I went in search of McLeod, who reported badly. There was lesion of some sort from the blow he had received, and it was necessary to treat the first officer as an invalid.

By eight o'clock our camp had the air of a picnic. From our store of provisions we had taken what was necessary, and a fire was blazing in the middle of the fort, at which we boiled water to make tea and coffee. We squatted to an admirable breakfast, at which, however, Miss Sylvester did not appear. I saw Wade

coming from her tent a little earlier, and he sat down to his meal in an excellently cheerful mood. He was bright with sallies, being in possession now of his incurable spirit of adventure.

"We've not got a bad start," he said, "and we've always the ship to rely upon as a base. Digby can hold it against this herd out here. It's a fair picnic, Ned; quite like the woods behind your father's rectory, eh, when you ogled the pretty girls on Sunday school beanoes."

The mound was silent, and we had heard no shooting for some time. It was the calm before the storm. Halliday, rapt in a sort of vision, was staring up at the cliff.

"Why, captain, this is bully for me," he said in the tone of one who is indulging in a pleasant reverie. "We got here all the same. I had a kind of premonition we'd come out on top. There's the Devil's Pulpit right enough. I don't want to talk tall any, but what's happened to those that said the chart was faked?"

"They've climbed down out o' sight," said Wade good-humouredly.

"I reckon I ought to have changed the name of that steamer, as I thought of doing," went on Halliday. "*Bonne Aventure!* How would that strike you?" he asked anxiously.

"It has a pleasing sound," said Wade.

"When you size it all up, captain," said Halliday, "the loss of that map and the documents ain't like being

at all bad for me. I guess I get off those contracts now. I guess Byrne and Clifford don't count anyway."

"Well, I wouldn't be certain they do," remarked Wade indifferently. "But the point is, what are we going to do? I'm at your service, Mr. Halliday. I'll steam for Bristol to-morrow if you like, or I'll stay here. There are worse places for a picnic."

"I guess we're going to stay here," said the American, with a smile. "And I guess we're going to get those dollars."

"How?" I asked bluntly.

He regarded me dreamily. "If I can't puzzle out a way within four and twenty hours, they have my full permission to walk off with the swag," he said confidently. "What I say goes. I didn't reckon on you and Captain Wade to help me out with it, only to dump me here. But as you've come along to give a helping hand, I'll shake, and be grateful. But the reckoning's up to me, and it's me that's got to do the thinking. I rather think I'll start right away."

He rose as he spoke, and went towards his shelter of branches.

"That's all very well, Ned," said Wade. "But where do we come in? And what are we going to do? I don't feel disposed to go to sleep, do you? While our friend is plotting, what's to become of us?"

He was going towards the zariba wall with a purposeful expression when Miss Sylvester came through the trees, and he swerved aside to her, his face wreathed with a smile. This was the old Wade, the character-

istic Wade, the Wade I tolerated but did not respect. I turned my back on them and went down to the stream.

The water was bubbling deeply, and heavy boulders were visible at the bottom. I looked up towards the gorge, which, as I have said, was a cañon in miniature. The stream issued from this not more than fifty yards higher in a rush of black water. The bank below the gorge on the mutineers' side was fringed with low-growing bushes. It seemed to me that anyone in the water, and bending low, might not be visible from the mound which they had made their headquarters, and from which they conducted their rifle practice. Yet if one were to follow the stream up into the dark and narrow cañon, would anything be practicable? It looked doubtful. The cliff could be scaled, no doubt, and the Pulpit reached from our side, because, according to the evidence, it had already been done. But we were barred from the venture by the rifle fire, which I had come to the conclusion would be no respecter of persons. They meant business, these mutineers. Who was it that had inspired them and kept them so well in hand? I could not believe it was Clifford. It might be Byrne, of whom I knew little; but I doubted it. On the whole, I inclined more to suspect Crashaw as being the brains of the rising.

Halliday, then, was to think out a plan for the discomfiture of the rebels, while we were to await his inspiration. This did not suit Wade's restless nature; he was for action at once, and he cast about in his mind for something to do. He was content enough in

his flirtation, but that, after all, could not occupy the day very well; so I was not surprised when he made a proposal at our midday meal. Miss Sylvester attended this, which went agreeably enough. Poor Marley was ill, but the rest of us were present, and in good spirits. Wade took command in his authoritative way, and with unusual good humour. He chaffed McLeod and myself; and carried on a series of rallies with Miss Sylvester which might have been appropriate at a picnic, but seemed out of tune with this grave business to which we were committed, and which he took so lightly.

"I'll tell you what it is, Halliday," said he; "when we get those doubloons of yours I'll buy one to hang round Miss Sylvester's neck as a souvenir. She's our mascot. You've observed that all along, haven't you?"

Halliday's eyes glowed on her, as if he pondered this deeply, and he replied:

"An American woman's always a mascot, I guess, captain, and I've known that long before you tumbled to it with your dull British wits."

Miss Sylvester laughed. "Oh, if I only could bring you luck with the treasure!" she cried fervently.

"You'll always bring luck," said Wade, with a particular bow; and to Halliday: "Well, we're burning with impatience to know what real American wits are going to devise. How are we going to lay hands on these same doubloons?"

"You leave it to me, captain," said the young man

solemnly. "I've just hitched up my team, and got in going order."

"All serene," said Wade. "And I'm going to amuse myself meanwhile." To me later he added: "Ned, I'm going across to inspect this camp."

"The mutineers?" I asked.

He nodded. "Damn it, man, do you think I'm going to sit down tamely under this?" he asked vehemently. "They're going to get their marching orders."

"They won't heed. We've got far beyond that," I said.

"I'm captain," he said with his old swagger, "and I'll ear-mark the beasts somehow."

"If you provoke a row——" I said, and shrugged my shoulders.

He turned on me angrily. "Provoke a row!" he said. "I'd like to know on what pretext you can apply the phrase to me. I'll give my orders, and, by the Lord, I'd shoot for two pins. It's rank black mutiny, and I'm entitled to."

"All right," said I cheerfully. "I suppose I've got to make the other corpse."

He grinned as the petulance left him. "Anyway, we may learn something," he said. "Yes, I'll take you."

It was in the middle of the afternoon when we started, slipping across the rushing stream under the cover of the protecting bushes. The mutineers had been silent since the morning, and we saw no signs of them, except the movement of a distant figure from time to time on

the mound, from which a thin smoke ascended, witnessing to the camp. Wade and I proceeded warily through the undergrowth, and pushed our way through the trees in the direction of the mound. We were armed with revolvers, but we did not make a show of them; they were in reserve for any emergency.

We had covered half the distance when a tall, gaunt figure emerged into the open, rifle in hand, and stood staring at us. It was Crashaw, with his bold, protruding eyes and savage air of demand; but he said nothing. His attitude was in itself a query. It demanded an answer of us.

"While you are holiday-making, who's your boss?" said Wade shortly.

Crashaw made a signal, and out of the undergrowth stole two more armed hands. He answered nothing, but the three stood watching us. Wade strode forward, with his hand in the pocket that held the revolver; he walked straight towards Crashaw, who stood aside as he reached him. Wade passed on, and Crashaw followed. The other men took up a position one on each side of us, and together in this curious fashion, with this strange escort, we reached the camp.

The too familiar voice of Clifford came to me as we neared it; and when we broke into view I saw he was playing cards with Byrne. Our appearance caused a diversion.

"Remember that's a jack-pot, my son," said Clifford as he put down his cards. "Cheer-oh, captain! I take this kindly."

"Who is bossing this show?" demanded Wade.

"Meaning this interesting exploration company?" said Clifford. "My honourable friend on the left." His hand indicated Byrne, whose Irish grin broadened.

"Goin' to take a hand, captain?" he asked. "That's sensible. There was a man I knew once that was in love with a gurl, and she gave him the chuck after a time, and took up with his friend. Well, ye don't suppose he took it badly, do you, captain? Not he; he just swore, and says he: 'I'll be damned if I'll lose a wedding breakfast anyway,' he says; and he offered himself as best man."

"What are you going to buy me when you come into your fortune, Byrne?" demanded Clifford.

"Six of Scotch would suit you, Jacko," said his friend.

"Antimacassars and maiden aunts!" exclaimed Clifford. "Have I not given you the eddication of a gen'leman? I want something lofty and high-toned—say a 40-h.p. Panhard, eh?"

"I suppose," said Wade, his anger showing in his rising colour, "that you know what this means?"

His was not the disposition or temperament to deal with such creatures as these. He was too impulsive, and they needed a coolness correspondent to their own.

"Blank sanguinary mutiny, don't you know," said Clifford, swigging at a bottle which lay beside him.

"That's so," said Wade, controlling himself; "and the penalty for mutiny is—death."

Clifford took up his cards. "I'll come in," he said.

Wade was now on a tide of passion, and I feared for the situation. I plucked at his sleeve, but he threw me off angrily.

"I order all you men aboard at once," he called in a loud voice. "Return to your duties at once."

The thunder of his tone arrested the other mutineers in the camp, who gazed at us with interest and wonder. Clifford and Byrne went on playing, and Crashaw remained immovable, gun in hand.

"This is your last chance," thundered Wade.

"That fly annoys me, Byrne," murmured Clifford. "Pop it off."

"If you've not returned to duty by six o'clock this evening I shall know how to deal with you," said Wade, delivering his last shot.

"I'll trouble you for that quid," said Clifford to Byrne, raking the cards towards him. "And the penalty is death!" he shouted as he shuffled. "Death!" He drawled it out melodramatically.

Wade took one step towards him, and towered over him menacingly. A look of alarm entered Byrne's sallow face; but Clifford glanced up indifferently, and the two men's eyes met and held each other for some time, Clifford's inscrutable, dark, and shining. Then he dealt.

"Death in the jack-pot!" he murmured. Wade turned abruptly away, and walked swiftly down the rise.

"Target practice begins at five P.M. sharp," shouted Clifford after us.

Wade spoke no word until we reached our camp; he was raging mad. Indeed, I think, on looking back, that he was fey that critical day. He went through the camp giving orders curtly, took no notice of Davenant and myself, and was sarcastic to Halliday. In his temperament was a good deal of vanity, and he had been humiliated by two common scoundrels. But in his character was good humour also, and that brought him round, together with an obstinate resolution which came uppermost with his best temper.

"The face of the cliff can be scaled," he said, eyeing it. "Just round the corner I think there is a funnel or chimney you can climb."

"There must be some means of access," I answered.

"I'll see," said he, and started.

"Don't do it, Wade," I said. "It's risky."

He paid no heed, but began to climb the barricade.

"Wade, don't!" I called.

He turned a determined face on me. "Do you take me for a common or garden engineer, Ned?" he said, with a set smile. He leaped down the other side, and waved his hand.

I will admit that I had no clear notion in my head as to his aim or intention. I vaguely assumed that we were to have a repetition of his previous experiment, and that he was putting them to the test. That was why I made no further protest, which, indeed, would have been useless with a man of Wade's temperament. And so I waited somewhat anxiously and curiously for the warning rifles. But Wade had got halfway across

the open space, and no report came. Was it possible, I asked myself, that the mutineers had been caught napping. Wade went briskly with that alert and athletic air that characterised him, and was now three parts of the way to the cliff. An exclamation near me drew my attention momentarily to Davenant, who was staring alternately at Wade and towards the mound from which we expected those shots. His face was drawn with anxiety.

"He would go. Why are they silent?" I said.

The eyes of the whole zariba were following our captain. Davenant took no notice; it seemed as if he had not heard. Wade reached the cliff, turned, threw up his hand again in a graceful swaggering gesture, and then pitched slowly forward against the wall. Simultaneously a loud crack rent the air and echoed from the precipice.

"The damned fools! Oh, the damned fools!" exclaimed the low voice of Davenant. A woman's cry, terrified and long drawn as a sob, came to us, and out of the tail of my eye I saw Miss Sylvester clutching at the brushwood with a wildly startled expression on her young face.

CHAPTER XII

OPEN WAR

A CONFLUENCE of voices assailed my ears in the instant. Instinctively I jumped forward, and seized Miss Sylvester by the arm.

"Come away!" I said.

"Good God, they've shot him!" cried McLeod, running up. "They've shot him, man! Let's wipe 'em out!" He leapt on the barricade, and gesticulated grotesquely, waving his arms in the direction of the mutineers' camp. I only caught some of his passionate utterances, for he was at fever-heat, and his words flowed from him in a froth. "Savage dogs . . . swine. . . . Burn 'em in their dirty styes. . . ."

As I held the girl, and she clung to me with terror in her grip, Davenant emerged suddenly from his stupor, and took command with an authoritative self-possession which afterwards I could not but admire; and the more so that his voice was shaky.

"Carter, Smith!" he called, "over with you for ambulance work." And himself, he scrambled across the barricade, followed by the sailors.

The three moved out slowly, and halted once some twenty paces away, turning to look in the direction of the mutineers. They evidently spoke together, and

Davenant held up a hand. It looked from where I stood almost as if he begged for a truce. Then they resumed their way, and very slowly crossed the fatal reach. No shot was fired, and none of the enemy were visible. The rescue party arrived without interference at the base of the cliff, and we could see the sailors stooping. Presently the three turned back, and the sailors were carrying something between them. And that was how Mark Wade perished under the shadow of the Devil's Pulpit.

For the bullet had passed through his heart, as McLeod testified when he had somewhat recovered his normal state; and Wade's last extravagance had been his death.

From that moment the conflict in which we were engaged took a new shape. I think we had all with that murder insensibly turned a corner. Blood had been shed, and the struggle was now a matter outside the range of civilisation. We were fighting in a no-man's land, without the pale of law, and obedient now only to primitive and savage instincts. The mutineers had taken that step, and we were committed to join issues with them. The only alternative was to give in, to turn our back on the island, and sail away; and in the circumstances, with this bloody deed enacted in our presence, that was not to be considered. We settled all this at a conference that evening. Wade's body was reverently bestowed in his shelter, and covered with a flag. His masterful will was at rest, but I think he would have liked to sleep in his country's flag. Halli-

day, who had been much shaken, and who looked ill, Davenant, pale but firm, McLeod and myself, met to consider the position. The alternative was broached, only to be dismissed summarily. We were resolute to see the thing to the end. These ruffians had declared war; war they should have.

Davenant, pending Marley's recovery, was now in charge, and he assumed the authority unobtrusively, giving his orders for the dispositions in his gentlemanly way. We had heard nothing of the mutineers since that fatal shot, and we did not know whether they might not follow it up by an assault upon the zariba. If they could shoot Wade in cold blood, they were doubtless equal to such a venture. They had clearly thrown all scruples to the winds. For this reason we decided to keep fires burning all night. We had a plentiful supply of brushwood in our camp, and we were also free to come and go. This I determined at once by an experiment. I explored the wood around us, but could see no signs of the enemy. As I was returning towards sunset I met Davenant, who had apparently been on the same mission of discovery.

"Look here, Herapath, it won't do for us to carry on like this," he protested. "I'd no notion you were gone. We must have discipline."

I apologised, admitting my mistake, but explained my reasons.

"Well, it's a good thing to know that," he said, "and it's been in my mind too. I've just been following the course of the stream downward, and find it runs crook-

edly into a broadish creek below. I couldn't see any enemy either; so maybe they're scared by what they've done."

I thought it likely, but pointed out that with such callous ruffians as they had proved we could not be sure, and I emphasised the danger of a night attack.

"Oh, we'll take care of that," he said confidently.

We lit fires in three places towards the stream and the southern barricade, so that any surprise from either side would be impossible. Davenant was of opinion that these would suffice, as the bush on the eastern side was so dense that it was not likely an attempt would be made from there.

"There's one thing," said Halliday, "and that's this Devil's Pulpit. They're likely enough to leave us alone if they can get at that; and under cover of darkness——"

"My dear sir, there are the fires," interjected Davenant impatiently.

"Well," said Halliday with his nervous humour, "under cover of the fires, I guess——"

"He's right," said I. "The flames of the fires will throw darkness on the cliff side. They will have it their own way there."

"Very well," Davenant agreed, rather reluctantly as I thought. "We'll have a fire on that side too; and Smith's our best shot, they tell me. We'll put Smith there." This was arranged, and we settled down to a sad and troubled night in a conflagration of light. There was much to exercise our thoughts upon this first

tragic night in camp. Marley was no better, and McLeod feared that an operation might be necessary, which would be impossible in our present situation. He and I discussed probabilities till a late hour. I could hardly believe that this was the same man who had caused so much trouble aboard, and whom poor Wade had marked out as the dangerous character. His superficial vices were all fallen from him like scales, and he stood forth in his strength and generosity as a man. When he had left me I sat thinking, until a voice broke across the thread of my melancholy meditations.

"Mr. Herapath, I just simply can't sleep," said Miss Sylvester plaintively. "I can't get that out of my eyes, and I can't help hearing it all too. Oh, I can't forget it."

"Sit and talk with me, then," I said soothingly. "I too want company. Thinking's bad at times, and I'm sure it is for you. Let's look at that smoke and the fire inside. Doesn't that remind you of the pillar of fire by night?" I made room for her by me, and she sat down with a little sigh. "Don't you find the power of association a wonderful comfort? There's comfort even in a phrase, a well-worn phrase. It is not the wind in those tropical palms I hear now; it is the low thunder of the organ in my father's church when I was a boy and listened to it across the intervening lawn and hedge, as I lay abed of nights. And those pyres—have you ever sat out on a summer day when the couch fires were alight in the fields? How homely it can all be if one yields to the magic of old associations! We are not

here on an inclement and inhospitable desert island, with the windy breath of the salt Atlantic in our nostrils——”

She shuddered, and sank against me. “Oh, how monstrous and horrible that looks—that Devil’s rock! It comes out and goes back into the night with the leaping of the flames.”

She nestled into me like a child, all else forgotten save her fear, and by the pressure of that warm and living body I was indescribably affected. A deep thrill went through me, and I put my arm about her. I had thought of her as a wayward and troublesome girl, as a coquette with little feeling, as of one self-conscious of her own beauty. And now I knew her merely for a helpless, dependent, and lovely woman. I had not been taken by her sexual caprices and foibles; I was profoundly and unexpectedly moved by her feminine weakness.

“Little girls,” said I, tremulously and foolishly, “little girls should all be abed by this time in sensible cabins on board sensible ships. I think we’ll make a journey to-morrow and see what the old tramp is about. Really, it would be very nice and comfortable there; now wouldn’t it?”

A faint “Yes” came to me; and then, as if she would apologise for this default of her hitherto brave spirit, she added: “It’s that—it’s Captain Wade, you know; I didn’t mind before. I never knew things would be——”

Poor child, I had wondered how rude an awakening she would have from this romantic dream of hers, but

I had not suspected that it would be so rude and so sudden. I looked across at the Pulpit, which at the base was lit as brightly as by a full moon in the flames of the fires. And then from the scene of the tragedy my eyes travelled upward along the dimmer outline till they reached the summit. It wavered in and out of vision, as she had said, like a ghost that appears and disappears. It suggested something mysterious, something foreboding, something menacing even, that great wall, that bulging platform in the dusk above and the loom of the superior heights that vanished into heaven and night beyond all.

I gazed, piercing the gloom with all the might of my eyes, when I became aware of a darker blotch in that darkness above, a blotch that moved, as if it were a blacker lump of air in the surrounding space. I sat up.

"What is it?" murmured Miss Sylvester drowsily.

She was near sleep now, exhausted by the day and its troubles; I laid her gently down, and covered her from the night air.

The blotch descended, dropping into the arena of lesser darkness, and becoming plainer by comparison. I knew what it was now, and I went forward to where McLeod sat by the fire. I pointed it out to him.

"What?" he said stupidly, for he too had been dozing.

"It's someone descending by a rope from the top of the cliff," I said. "See, just there! He's clearer now."

McLeod rubbed his eyes. "Gosh!" he said, and stared.

"It's an attempt to drop on to the Pulpit," I said. "We must give the alarm to Davenant."

"Hell!" cried McLeod in his Scottish voice, and ran quickly away from me.

Within two minutes he was back, but I did not notice in the darkness what he carried until he levelled a gun.

"McLeod!" I called; but the report was my only answer. The camp awoke about us, and voices engaged together. Davenant came tumbling out of his hut to our side.

"What is it?" he demanded.

We did not answer, for we were both looking hard at the figure on the rope through the night. It had come to a pause in mid-air a hundred feet, I judged, above the Pulpit, and fully six hundred feet above the earth below.

"Did you hit?" I whispered.

"I don't miss," he rasped back.

The figure hung still, and now it dangled to the moving of the rope. The fire, kicked into a blaze, belched flames to the sky, and flickered on the dancing figure. In that light it had the appearance to me of a monstrous monkey toy that jumps to strings from above. It was lurid; it was horrible. And of a sudden it ceased, and yet the cessation was as horrible. Nevertheless, I was glad it had gone, though I cried out even as it fell. For above, some hand had ruthlessly cut

through the now useless rope, and the body dropped with a revolting thud through six hundred feet of empty space. I heard McLeod's voice steady by me:

"That's one for old Wade."

The camp was troubled and silent. Men spoke in whispers, realising now what all this portended. McLeod put away his gun, and went back to the fire. Davenant had said not a word, and I thought he was silent because he did not know what to say. The shooting of this hapless wretch had not been authorised, but McLeod might easily have defended it. Some action had to be taken at once, and the mutineers were practically outlaws. This was no-man's land, as I have said. But the deed had been done, and nothing could avail to recall it. There was nothing to be said. I went back to where Miss Sylvester lay, and found her awake and startled. I watered the truth down into something more innocent and less hideous. There had been an alarm, I told her, and a sentry had fired; but all was well now. Well! I began to have a deeper dread myself, now that man's unbridled and naked passions had been roused. I was all the more determined that the girl should return to the ship when daylight came.

This proposal I made to Davenant in the morning, and he cordially agreed.

"It just fits in properly, Herapath," he told me, speaking briskly, for he quite seemed to have discharged from his memory the unpleasant event of the night.

"I was going to make a suggestion to you. You see, we're likely to be here some time; at least we've got to be prepared for that. And that makes your proposal all the more necessary. But we'll want a store of provisions, and so I suggest that you should take some of the men and bring them up from the ship. There's some in our cache, but we'll want more. You can get down to the boat by an easier way than we came up, and you're not likely to be interfered with. You should be back by nightfall."

"Good," I said; "an excellent idea, killing two birds with one stone. I'll want two men. Can you spare them?"

"Oh, we're safe enough here; they wouldn't dare attack in daylight, with our stiff brushwork. I'll undertake to hold them off till you return, if they do come."

"Right," I assented. "I should like Collins and Carter."

"The very men I was going to propose you should take," he replied cheerfully. "Yes, you're right to get Miss Sylvester away, and the sooner you start the better."

The news of the mutineer's horrid death had drifted to the girl's ears by this time, and she welcomed my suggestion as to her departure.

"Yes; I don't want to be here any longer," she said. "It's dreadful. I didn't know people were such cruel savages."

"Oh, life is cruel, as cruel as death," I said. "But

you're too young to learn it. That is a lesson which is better left to come slowly."

We started at eight o'clock on our journey back to the cove, in which we had landed only thirty-six hours before. How much had happened in that brief period—how much that was irretrievable! It was a fine cool morning with a promise of later heat, and we set off slantwise from the stream with alacrity, keeping a course on the lower slopes of the wooded hills towards the east. In our night journey we had kept to the summit, and had thus needlessly, as we discovered, experienced greater difficulties. For the lower slopes were more sparsely wooded, and progress was not arduous. As we went, however, the sun grew stronger and beat upon us fiercely, so that we were glad to rest and take some refreshment on the banks of a pleasant little crystal stream which ran merrily towards the blue water, which we could see a mile below us sparkling and brightening under the sun. The bluff of a headland hid the *Duncannon* from us.

Miss Sylvester's spirits had risen since our departure from the camp. She was of essentially a volatile nature, and lived, as I had observed, in the present. I do not say that she had forgotten the tragic incidents which had scared her, but she certainly was able to keep her mind from them, and this, I conceived, by the rapt contemplation and enjoyment of the phenomena around her. There was much to observe and much to stimulate. Other people's thoughts might be flying forward to the cache and the *Duncannon* and our ulti-

mate destiny, but not so Ariadne Sylvester's—for that I learned now was her beautiful name. She lived in a riot of her senses on the way down, touched to sensitive issues by the sunshine and the sparkling sea, by the green, green woods, the bird life, and the cool water. And the lithe grace with which she moved was wonderful and exquisite to the eye.

If it had not been for the serious issues of the impending conflict, and the tragic facts of the past four and twenty hours, it would have been possible to enjoy our excursion as a pleasant picnic. We ate our biscuits and tinned salmon and drank of the cold, clear water, and were refreshed by the shade and the swirl of the stream. Miss Sylvester let herself drift on the current of her feelings. She gazed dreamily down towards the sea.

"Is that the Spanish Main there?" she asked. "And is this where Drake and Raleigh and all those old adventurers sailed and fought?"

"The Spanish Main is not the sea," I explained, "but the land. This is the Caribbean Sea, which, I think, is pretty romantic enough in sound."

"Romantic!" she echoed, and her face changed, swiftly clouding. "Oh, I don't want that kind of romance. If that is romance, I don't want it. But it isn't. Romance is—oh, it's different. Drake and Raleigh and those gallant seamen——"

"Were buccaneers, some say," I put in. "They sacked cities, they ravaged the settlements, they sank ships, they took lives."

She sighed. "Why is it all so confusing?" she asked.

"Romance is the cream of tragedy," I said. "It is thrown up by sordid adventures; it emerges from rough and horrid facts. It's all in the eye of the mind. We can see with a romantic cast, if that is our temperament. Personally, I see no glory and no haloes in blood and mud. But blood and mud are necessary. We mustn't be sentimentalists. And out of that ugly admixture may arise great and noble deeds. There you have the quintessence then of romance and the romantic."

"But that," she said in a low voice, glancing back towards the hills from which we had descended, "*that* was not necessary."

"No; but our struggle with it is necessary. Wade died finely, if foolishly. I should not like to say that no noble thing would be accomplished even here on this empty tiny island before we have done. Nobility and magnanimity and all great virtues are born in the dust-heap, and in the charnel-house, amid the lusts and cruelties of human life."

She went for long in silence when we resumed, and I respected her mood, falling back to talk with Collins and Carter. The former was anxious to know if there was any likelihood of an attack on the camp, and I told him that Davenant was confident of holding it in safety.

"There's none too many, sir," he said doubtfully, "and now we're away."

"I'd trust Mr. Davenant," said the slow Carter. "He's a good sailor, and he knows his mind. I think he's took this a bit anxiously. He was up all night, and off in the bush, exploring. He ought to be dead beat. Why, I was wore out when on watch this morning, and I nearly fell asleep, when I seed him climbing back over the barricade. 'Twas only then he seemed settled like in his mind. I reckon he'd put things all right then."

Davenant had evidently been busy, and I wondered that he had not spoken to me of his nocturnal expedition. On the whole, I thought he made a better head than Marley would have done with his free and easy methods.

We climbed the bluff by a low-lying saddle, and descended into the cove beyond, where after some exploration we discovered the boat high and dry under some bushes, and were able to identify the cache. This we opened, but were disappointed at finding the provisions therein to be fewer in quantity than we had anticipated. Doubtless in the haste of our flight there had not been time to collect a great deal. The matter was, however, of slight consequence, since we had the ship to draw from; and there she lay, floating tranquilly on a tranquil sea, barely a mile away.

We soon pushed the boat down the slope and over the sand, till it ran with a splash into the pellucid blue waters. The bay shelved steeply, but I could see far down into its depths, where little crabs walked crossways, and shells were buried in the sand. Miss Syl-

vester, charmed by the unaccustomed sight, hung over the side of the boat as under the powerful strokes of Collins and Carter we drew out of the quiet cove towards the sparkling waters of the broad ocean.

It was by now high noon, and a little ripple lapped about the boat, and a light breeze blew in our faces. The flag at the peak of the tramp fluttered gently. It was halcyon weather. When we drew close enough to hail I raised my voice, and a figure appeared in the stern of the *Duncannon*. "Halloa!" it said.

"Mr. Digby there?" I called out.

"Yes, sir," said the man after a moment's pause.

"Right; make ready when we come along. We'll want the gangway."

I steered her against the side, and the gangway was let down. Two or three of the hands were above, looking down, but not Digby. I passed Miss Sylvester up, and proceeded to follow her. As I stepped aboard I asked the quartermaster, who stood with a grin on his face, where Digby was.

"In his cabin, sir," he replied.

Collins and Carter were busy with the boat below.

"Come along," called Edwards; "we'll see to it. Anxious for a job these days."

Collins and Carter clambered up, and as the latter stepped over the side I was seized by the arm. I swung about amazed, and found I was in the hands of three men.

"What the devil's this?" I demanded.

"We weren't going to take no risks with you," said

Edwards, with a chuckle. "One apiece is good enough for the others."

"So," I said, making no attempt to struggle, "so you're Clifford's dirty party too, eh?"

"We're going to take you to Mr. Digby, sir," explained the ringleader. "You won't come to no harm here. There's lots of grub and drink."

I understood now. These men, whom we had supposed loyal, had been left on board to deceive us, and to hold the ship for their companions. They had made a prisoner of Digby, probably immediately we had gone, and now they held us captive. In the light of this fresh discovery it was plain that we had undertaken a desperate task in the defence of the Devil's Pulpit. Our fortress was weaker by the loss of three men, and its source of supplies was cut off. Only a miracle or an accident could save it now. I looked about. Miss Sylvester had vanished.

CHAPTER XIII

THE STORMING OF THE ZARIBA

OUR captors took us down into the saloon, thrust us into a cabin, and there ironed us. They did not display any animosity in doing so, and the quartermaster, at least, did not seem averse from conversation. I saw he was anxious to learn exactly what had happened on the island, but I had no intention of letting him know. I wondered what instructions he had and when he received them. It was probable that the mutineers ashore had not communicated with their fellows aboard, and that the latter were acting on general instructions received when Clifford, Byrne, and Crashaw left the ship. So I returned my gaoler's good humour, but told him nothing. We were given food and left to our own uncomfortable thoughts. The sun streamed through the porthole, but it was dark on the floor where we lay, and the closed cabin was stuffy with heat. Digby was not with us, but we assumed that he was somewhere near, probably in the next cabin.

"This ain't a nice situation," volunteered the equable Carter.

"If I could only get my thoomb free I think I could manage to get rid of these irons," said Collins in his broad accent as he struggled.

But I had no such hope; my mind was busy in

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another way. I wanted a visit from the quartermaster. But it was not he whom we saw first; for when the door opened at last it let in the face of the little Frenchman. He peered down on us cautiously, without any expression in his eyes, as if he were contemplating some strange and rather uninteresting animals. Then he saluted civilly enough, and inquired if we were comfortable.

"It's not our bodies we're thinking of," I told him. "It's our feelings that suffer. This means the ruin of Halliday's enterprise."

"Pouf!" he said contemptuously. "I did not believe in that treasure. It was all——" He shrugged his shoulders. "I have heard many tales like that, monsieur. There has never been one word of truth in them. They will find it out too, these mutineers; and then we will sail away comfortable and at convenience for Baltimore."

He was cool and collected and capable. He had the air of standing aloof from the contending parties and waiting patiently until they should come to their senses.

"I wish I could help you," he said politely; "but what will you? I have no authority here." Again he shrugged his shoulders. "Yet if the irons hurt I would see what could be done."

As they did not specially incommode us he left us, and we fell to brooding over the situation again. I wondered how it was M. Carvaulx came to be free, while Digby was under restraint, and concluded that the mutineers saw no reason to fear anything from a weak

and helpless old man. We were left to our dismal reflections for some hours. Collins struggled at intervals with his gyves, and occasionally Carter made a remark which was more or less fatuous if honest. His philosophy annoyed me, who was chafing in my bonds.

"I knowed there was something on," he said once, like Mr. F.'s aunt, to the air. "But I didn't know so many was in it."

"Why on earth didn't you say so?" I asked, out of patience.

He shook his head. "'Tisn't for the likes of me. I wouldn't take it upon me. I knows my place."

He was imperturbable in his stupidity, and really thought he was holding the scales of justice by strict neutrality. I gathered that it was a grief to him to have had to take sides.

"Not but what I'm in it now," he added more reassuringly. "And I do my dooty when I has to. I'll lay I'm in it now," he repeated cheerfully.

Collins had paused in his operations, red of face. "D'ye think you could reach the door, sir?" he inquired in a mysterious whisper.

"I can try," I said, and being nearest it, I rolled over. A crack on my head brought the water into my eyes.

"Eh, pardon!" said a voice.

I gathered my body and my senses together, and looked up. M. Carvaulx stood with his hand on the open door, and beside him the quartermaster, Edwards, with a sheepish smile on his face.

"Will you give us your word of honour, sir, not to attempt to escape if I knock the irons off of you?" he asked.

"My good scoundrel, what's the use of that to us?" I said. "I'm not pining for your company."

He cast a glance at the Frenchman, who observed us without expression; then they went out, and I could hear their voices issuing from the saloon. In half-an-hour they returned, and the quartermaster began silently to loosen the irons.

"I am glad to say, Mr. Herapath, that they have consented to release you," said Carvaulx airily. He looked on with indifferent eyes. I was puzzled.

"You must promise not to give us away," mumbled the quartermaster awkwardly. "I'm taking a risk with this job."

"You're taking a bigger risk by associating yourself with those mutineers," I said sharply. "What do you suppose will be the end of that?"

"Damn it, sir, if you had Crashaw to buck up against, you'd think twice," he protested sullenly. "Anyways, I want your word of honour to be mum on this."

"We're not likely to be seeing Crashaw in a friendly way," I said sarcastically. "You can depend on that."

By this time I was free, and I rose and stretched myself. "I don't know how it has been managed," I said, "but I can only conceive, sir, that we are indebted to you for this."

M. Carvaux smiled faintly. "I have been at pains to explain to these gentlemen," he said, "my opinion of treasure."

"Then they give up?" I queried in surprise.

He shrugged his shoulders. "Not exactly that; but have you not an old—oh yes, a proverb which says 'A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush?'" He smiled. "They have the bird in hand."

I understood. He had bribed them, but why? And even as I thanked him I knew, and even as I knew he told us.

"My niece was *exigeante*," he said with admirable frankness. "She took your capture much to heart. She is impulsive," he added after a contemplative pause. If it had depended on M. Carvaux alone I was sure we should have been still in irons, but, nevertheless, we were deeply in his debt, and I acknowledged the fact.

"It is nothing," he said, deprecating my thanks. "A few of your English five-pound notes, *voilà!*"

By this time the others had been released, and now joined us in the saloon, followed by the quartermaster.

"We shall want our boat," I said to the latter authoritatively. I did not know how far the compact with Carvaux went, and so I bluffed.

"You can't have any stores," he said hastily.

* I was relieved. It was not intended to keep us on the ship.

"Look here, my man," I said bluntly. "I'm willing to look over all this, and forget it, and I can promise others will forget it, if you'll come back to duty."

"You couldn't buck up against Crashaw," he said after a pause. "No, we've gone too far."

"Well, you, at least, have hands clean of blood," I urged. "Stop while it's yet time."

"Blood!" he echoed, staring at me.

"Yes, man; didn't you know? They've killed the captain; a deliberate foul murder!"

His jaw dropped. "By the Lord!" he said.

"Come along," said the Frenchman in my ear. "We must get that boat."

I thought of Digby, but I knew that our own fortunes depended upon immediate action now; and so I turned and followed him up the stairs, and we came on deck. The sun was declining away in the west, but still shone strongly. The water lapped the sides of the tramp. A few sailors watched us curiously as we descended the ladder to our boat, but no one endeavoured to prevent us. Evidently they had all enjoyed backsheesh. And they were too far away from the scene of action to take things strenuously, and I knew now they were in ignorance of what had happened.

"While he is in this confusion and doubt it is our time," said Carvaultx to me. "He may change his mind on considering your news."

"Are you coming?" I asked.

"Yes," he nodded. "And Ariane must come too. She cannot be left. Stay, I will bring her."

He ran from the gangway towards the deck cabin, the door of which was thrust open ere he reached it, and Miss Sylvester emerged, her young face bright and

eager. Next moment they had joined us, and were descending. There was no time for words between us.

"If you please, cast off," said the Frenchman urgently. The quartermaster appeared above, looking down on us in perplexity.

I laughed. "There is no fear," I said. "Barring firearms, the whole ship's crew could not take us now."

We pushed off, and Edwards's face was still directed towards us racked with doubt and fear.

"So the captain is dead," said the Frenchman, seating himself comfortably in the bows. "So Ariane said. Ah!" He meditated, while the distance between the boat and the steamer lengthened. Ariadne looked at me, her eyes shining with joy.

"You are not afraid to be going back?" I whispered.

She shook her head. "I could not have stayed there. They are mutineers too."

"We owe everything to your pleading and your uncle's generosity," I said gratefully.

"No; nothing. I am with you. I am on your side, and I was glad to do even so little. Perhaps I shall do more. Who knows?"

We skirted the island westward, without landing in the cove, as I had an idea in my head, which was to explore the creek into which the stream from our camp ran. I supposed that here the mutineers would have their boat, for although they had landed at the back of the island, they would not be likely to leave the boat so far distant from their permanent camp. Accordingly we beached within the creek quietly, and I began

to make an examination. There was no boat on the water, nor could we discover any signs of the presence of one in that tidal basin. I was disappointed, for I had promised myself that I should deliver an unexpected blow at the enemy by the capture of their lines of communication. However, our immediate duty was to report the situation to Davenant, and so, having bestowed our own boat in a safe place, we set out in the cool of the evening up the course of the stream. We had been absent ten hours, and had accomplished nothing. We were even returning with Miss Sylvester, whose presence we had decided was inconvenient in the camp.

This part of the island, as I have explained, was not so roughly wooded, and we made easy progress, arriving below the stockade just on dusk. Here occurred an event which at once began to trouble me. I was ahead of the others, and we were walking in silence as a precaution, when my ears detected a noise in the bushes on my left. I brought the others to a halt with a gesture, and stole forward, parting the bushes carefully with my hands to make way for my eyes. Beyond was a little clearing, and under the trees were seated two men, conversing in a low voice and at the same time engaged in some occupation which I could not at once determine. Nor could I recognise them at the distance, although it was obvious to which party they belonged. Presently, as I looked, one got to his feet, and picked up something from the ground. I knew him now for a big Dago, by name Benuto, and simultaneously I recog-

nised what he had in his hand. It was a large Colt's revolver.

Here was an alarming discovery, which was intensified next moment when the second man rose; for I saw now that they had been engaged in filling a pouch with cartridges. My heart began to jump, for what might this portend? Without noise I left the point of espial and returned to my companions.

"It looks as if an attack were contemplated," I said. "We must hurry forward at once. M. Carvaulx, I advise you to take Miss Sylvester and retire to the creek below. This is no place for non-combatants."

He pondered. "Yes, you are right," he agreed. "But we will not go so far. You may be mistaken. We will part now and go that way." He pointed eastward through the falling evening.

I nodded. We must act now, and not talk. We had, I discovered, two revolvers between us, and these we loaded. Then we set forward, making a slight detour so as to avoid falling in with the mutineers if any of them should be in the direct line of our course.

Of a sudden the silence was broken by a shot, and, as if this had been the signal, a confused outbreak of voices and sounds ensued. A revolver was banging away on my left, and I directed my steps towards the sound, falling into a run. Carter and Collins jogged along behind me, and as I ran I heard Carvaulx's voice raised in command.

"Ariane! Ariane!"

I glanced round. The girl was following in our tracks, breathless.

"Back! Back!" I shouted, gesticulating, but I dared not stop. I saw her waver and come to a pause, and then the bushes hid her.

The noises increased ahead, swelling into a fusillade of yapping pistols. I remembered with regret that only two of us were armed in this emergency, and as I did so an idea came to me. I turned, and, scarcely pausing, threw my revolver to Carter, who was weaponless.

"Use that," I panted, "and use it well. You're with us, mind."

"Ay, ay, sir," he called back with an energy which dissipated my doubts of him.

In my direct path was the ruin of a fallen tree, and, swiftly detaching one of the stouter branches, with an abrupt wrench I darted forward with my new weapon. It formed a sort of rude barbaric club with a long handle, and I could feel it plying and giving elastically in my hands as I ran. The next moment we came out of the wood upon the barricade.

The dusk was gathering, but the figures were plainly visible in that theatre of battle. Davenant stood upon the brushwood, elevated against the sky, and in full view from either side of the barricade; and as he stood there, so rashly exposed, he pointed and shouted something which I could not hear. His back was towards us, and he was not aware of our approach. In the middle distance I recognised two of our men in hand-

to-hand conflict with mutineers; and a constant popping of revolvers enhanced the confusion of the scene. The mutineers were over the brushwood barrier, and the camp was all but in their hands. We took the barricade, as a hurdle, and dashed up. Collins's weapon flashed out near me, and one of the mutineers, struggling by the stream, fell. Then, oblivious to all else save my personal share in the mellay, I fell on with my mace. Two mutineers were descending into the camp from the brushwood, and the first of these went down with the club on his crown; the second fired at me point-blank, and a ball singed my face. Then his skull cracked as he tumbled on his fellow. More men were mounting out of the dusk, and it was evident that the stronger part of the attacking force was still to come.

"To me! To me!" I cried, leaping forward to the barricade.

Collins hurried to my side, panting and puffing. I glanced round. The two mutineers by the stream had disappeared, but one body lay outstretched along the bank. McLeod and another man were fighting at the back. Where was Davenant? He had gone from the brushwood pile, and I could see nothing of him.

"We've got them checked now," I said to Collins. "McLeod is holding that side, and we can hold this."

His revolver answered promptly the appearance of a head beyond the barrier, and it was hurriedly withdrawn. Except for the sounds which came from McLeod's side there was now silence.

"Hold this," I said to Collins. "Have you cartridges? Shoot on the slightest provocation."

I ran back, crossed by the shelters, and joined McLeod as his companion stumbled heavily and fell. There were three mutineers on this side, and one was armed with a gun which he was using as a club. This club met mine and crumpled up; he lost his balance and staggered. My mace recovered and descended ere he could recover. He lay beside our fallen sailor. McLeod, from behind a tree, began to spit fire, and one of the mutineers uttered an oath, dropped a useless arm by his side, and turned to fly. I took the third—well, somewhere in his hinderparts, as he too turned, to assist him in his retreat. He was a little out of reach, but he yelled like a Red Indian, and the last I saw of him was scrabbling futilely at the barricade of bushes, and being helped over by his companion. I turned to McLeod. Silence had fallen. We were victors. The dusk deepened.

It was broken by a leaping light, and I saw someone against a pyre. I went over, and found it was Davenant.

"We're well out of that," was his greeting. "You came in the nick of time."

"It's a wonder we came at all," I said.

"How's that?" he asked. The flames lapping up the dry wood ascended in tongues to heaven. The camp flared with it, and the darkness of the surrounding wood was enhanced by it.

"We were seized by the remainder of the crew," I

explained. "They've joined the mutineers. We were jockeyed there. We played into their hands like lambs."

"Seized, were you?" he said, staring. "How did you escape?"

Before I could tell my story Carter came up.

"There's one of 'em dead along the stream, sir," he said in his matter-of-fact voice, "and that there one you hit—he ain't going to give much trouble—an Italian he was, called Bellows."

"Belloso!" I corrected. "How many on our side?"

"Let's go and see," said Davenant. We encountered McLeod, breathing hard, but very well satisfied with himself.

"You've broken that fellow's skull, Herapath," he said. "Lord, what a flail to lay on with!"

"Much damage?" I asked.

"That poor beggar Atchison's gone," he said. That was the man who was shot just as I reached him.

"It's a bad business all round," said I.

Collins was lighting another pyre by the waterside. We walked in brightness, a mark for any sharpshooter, but I don't think any one of us gave a thought to this. And as for the mutineers, they had had enough for that day. There were no signs of them. We reckoned up the losses. One of our men had been killed, and three, including Collins, wounded. Collins's wound was only in the hand, and he made light of it. On the other side the casualties were heavier. Two of the mutineers had

been killed, and we had two of them wounded in our custody. How much more they had suffered we could not say. Suddenly I recalled Halliday. Where was he?

We found him, on searching, near one of the fires, where he sat with a piece of paper and a pencil busily engaged in making notes.

"Say, Herapath," he eagerly exclaimed, looking up at me, "I've just got the most all-fired notion to get that treasure out of there. You sit down right here, and I'll show you. It came upon me like a flash just as I was pulling the trigger of this engine. Say now——"

He rose excitedly, but I interrupted somewhat curtly. "Oh, hang it, we've got other fish to fry at present. Let that keep. Do you know that Atchison's dead, and that two of their men are dead too?"

"Say, now, that's a nuisance about Atchison," remarked Halliday, scratching his head reflectively. A handkerchief untwisted itself on his arm, and dangled.

"What's this?" I asked.

He looked out of his dream. "That? Oh, I guess I got stung by one of those wasps," he said indifferently.

His coolness staggered me; his power of abstraction was something utterly unfamiliar. The idealist was in full play, and nothing mattered but the "scheme." Nothing had any proportion beside it. Outside the light of that scheme there was darkness. It was a sun by which nothing else in the heavens was visible. He came back slowly to earth.

"I reckon this was pretty tough," he remarked, glancing about.

"We couldn't stand much more of it," said I.

"I'm just going to make it nice and comfortable for all those sailors who have stood by me loyally," he said with the complacency of one who is already in possession of a fortune. "You must just make me out a list, Herapath, and I'll square generously with the widows and orphans. They won't find Vincent Halliday a cold stone, you bet. Come along now, and we'll tot up how we stand."

He made a move for the big tree under which he had built his shelter of brushwood, and I followed him, affected in a strange way by his remarkable attitude. Here was I come back with the worst of news, and the camp saved by the skin of its teeth, so to speak, from the mutineers; and this bright-eyed sanguine man was seated, feverishly plotting out what he should do with the fortune which was not his, which might not even exist, and from which at any rate he was cut off by virulent enemies.

"Say, Herapath," he said, lighting his lantern, which hung on the brushwood break-wind, "we'll have to fix up a fresh deal. That original agreement's in the melting-pot, I guess. We'll have to hand round slices on another footing. I'll have you and those men in anyway."

I turned at a sound, a rushing, whirling sound of skirts, and into the light of the lantern broke Ariadne Sylvester.

"Miss Sylvester! You!" I said.

"Yes—I came to—I came to——" She was breathless, and did not finish. "I'm so glad you're not—oh, I'm glad you beat them."

She was glowing; she looked like a creature of fire, a radiant nymph of the woods, with her dishevelled hair. Halliday had stuck his pencil behind his ear and risen. He offered her welcome as if he had been receiving her punctiliously in a soft-goods store.

"Now, it's right-down good of you to come along to look after us," he said courteously. "But I'm blamed if I didn't think you were on board the *Duncannon*."

"Halliday, that's my story," I put in, "and it's ugly."

He stared; and I told him.

CHAPTER XIV

IN THE PULPIT

I CANNOT honestly say that my dismal tale affected Halliday much. He contorted his brows in thought for a minute or two, and then they cleared.

"We'll fix them up all right," said this unmitigated optimist. "I guess we'll freeze them out, so as they'll be glad to quit. I got a notion or two."

Well, it must rest at that. Halliday's notions were innumerable; he hatched them out prolifically; and it was odds but one among so many would serve. At any rate, he was confident. One notion he revealed that night as we rested after the toil and hazards of the assault.

"I don't take no stock in a man that can't turn and face about," he said complacently. "You got to legislate for emergencies. And here's one. Well, I've got the prescription to cure it, and that's dynamite."

"Dynamite!" I echoed.

He seemed pleased with my surprise. "Yes; I thought that maybe it would come in handy, and so I scheduled a bit; and what's more, it's cached along with the cans in the cove yonder."

But of what avail could dynamite be? I pressed him, and gasped at the brave ingenuity of his confident mind. If dynamite wouldn't blast the Devil's Pulpit, it

might blast the traitors' camp. He had faith in dynamite—as a last resource. But other resources were not exhausted. He fixed his gaze contemplatively on the precipice, and he was owning it in his inmost thoughts. His possession of it was legible on his mobile face. There was no contending with such assurance.

Yet our case was bad enough. On the one hand, we had lost the ship; on the other, our embittered and unscrupulous enemy lay in wait for us. Doubtless, we had given them a lesson which would keep them quiet for a time, but I felt certain that they would not abandon their designs on the treasure—if treasure there were in the ledges of that abominable wall above us. Diminished in numbers, therefore, and with growing misgivings, we kept strict watch throughout the night. Miss Sylvester, it appeared, had deserted her uncle out of an irrisistible curiosity to know what had happened. At least, that was what she told us.

"I knew we could thrash those scoundrels—those murderers," she said with vehemence. "I wasn't afraid of being beaten."

And yet her confusion and distress on her hasty arrival was hardly compatible with the assurance which she afterwards professed. She still remained a problem for us, but I was in hopes that I might persuade her in the morning to return to her uncle in the safer woods.

Despite the excitement of the day's adventures, or indeed perhaps because of it, I was unable to sleep more than a few hours, and it must have been one o'clock in the morning when I at last gave up the attempt and

strolled out into the light and shadow of the fires. I passed one of our men on sentinel duty near the water, and exchanged a friendly sentence with him. A cool air fanned my face very agreeably, rolling in from the sea. I looked up at the vague wall behind, from which the projections of the Pulpit stood out darkly. And then I remembered an earlier thought of mine regarding the stream.

I went down to this, and walked into it up to my thighs. The mutineers' quarters could be seen in the flame of our fires on the distant mound. I wondered if they kept so strict a watch after their repulse and disaster. Could Crashaw keep his men in hand after so signal a defeat? Bending my body towards the face of the stream I crept across towards the bushes on the other side. The torrent broke over me a dozen times, and I all but fell on a round boulder underfoot; but I succeeded in reaching the bushes, and rested under their shelter for a little while, using my eyes to make observations from my new place of vantage in the meantime.

The stream brawled out of cavernous darkness some fifty yards away, and I meant to make this my second stage. Consequently I once more crawled, waist-deep, with bent head, along the bed of the water. The current was tremendous, and every step I took was as if some heavy blow was delivered on my body, while in addition the water was dragging at my legs. Still I made my way, if slowly, upward, and without causing an alarm arrived at the mouth of the gorge through which

the stream tumbled. Once there I was safe from observation, even if I could accomplish nothing more. Here darkness hung between the walls, and I could at first make out nothing of my surroundings. But presently the dim mass of the precipice on both sides emerged upon the sight, and as I pressed forward and upward, still in the stream, which ran cold as ice, I was aware by my ears of a cascade somewhere at the back of the little cañon. The stream must rise somewhere high up, and come down in falls on its abrupt and sudden way to the sea. I was momentarily getting more and more chilled, and I decided that I must leave the water. On each side was rough rock, in the interstices and ledges of which bushes and creepers were growing. I clambered out of the torrent on the east side—that is, towards the wall of the precipice which rose into the Devil's Pulpit on its south side.

At first I found the ascent easy, for the numerous bushes were of invaluable assistance in climbing, but presently they became sparser, and the elevation almost perpendicular. I was afraid of making a mistake in the darkness, and of being precipitated down upon the rocks and boulders below. I tried every outstanding stone or bush thoroughly before trusting to it, and I mounted very slowly. When I had reached the height, as I guessed, of about a hundred feet, the precipice suddenly ceased, and I found myself climbing under the loom of great walls at an angle of sixty degrees. It was as if I had slipped unawares into a narrow valley path cut in those rock mountains, and I wondered as I

went if by chance this could be the way in which the former ascents to the treasure had been made. I was by now full of the spirit of my adventure, and I moved with greater speed and confidence. Nothing, I think, would have turned me back. The track between rocky spurs, like a gutter on the leads, now twisted and began to crawl over a shoulder, and presently my eyes, which had been peering through black night, were saluted by a gleam. I took a few steps farther, and the light increased. Next moment I was looking over a projecting rock down at the blazing fires of the camp. A dozen feet below me was the floor of the Pulpit!

The sky was full of stars, and a falling moon which rained soft radiance upon the sheer and jagged wall above me. Earthward the flare of the pyres threw leaping shadows on the base of the precipice. For a moment I stood resting on the rock by which I had mounted and drinking in this scene with curious eyes. It was wonderful in its strangeness and in its beauty. Upon that ledge I was but an emmet, safe from the notice of any observer on the earth beneath. The waning crescent shed a glow westward upon the dark woods that descended to the sea, and far out upon the quiet ocean left a luminous track. From my eyrie I could see over the projecting headlands where the coves indented the shore-line, and the dark outline of the *Duncannon* was dimly visible. Beneath the smoke ascended in wreaths from the watch fires, which shone like fiery jewels through five hundred feet of space.

I stepped down upon the floor of the Pulpit fasci-

nated, and then I remembered the treasure. The ledge on which I stood was some twenty feet square, and rose on the outside edge into a natural parapet. On each other side the rock fell away into the space which it overhung. By the light of the moon I took in these facts and also others. The rock was overlaid by a slight surface of earth, but this was only a few inches deep, and it was, therefore, obvious that no treasure could have been buried there. I was fast coming to the conclusion that the whole story was a figment, as I had always in my heart conceived, when I approached the perpendicular wall from which the ledge jutted out. Here my interested and now excited gaze was caught by a hole yawning in the rock. I explored it, and found that it opened into a cavern of some dimensions. Was it the treasure house? And was there something after all in the wild story?

I had some matches in my pocket, and, striking one, by the flickering light I scrutinized the cave. In one corner was a rude chest, bound with heavy iron. My heart leaped. I went forward, and threw the lid open. It was empty. Lighting a succession of matches I examined the floor of the cave, which was uneven. It was composed of black earth, and a mound of this lying by the chest suggested that the latter had been dug up. I probed with my pocket-knife, loosening the earth, and scooping it out with my hands until I had got down a foot. Then the knife struck something hard. Was it a second chest? Or was it merely the rock? I was profoundly moved, and I went on work-

ing, loosening and scooping, scooping and loosening, with the utmost energy. My matches were by this time exhausted, and I worked in the dark, feeling with my fingers, and striving to dig round this object that claimed my attention. Presently my knife struck again on something hard, and my fingers precipitately groped about it. It was a small thing, but even through the adhesive dirt I judged it to be oblong and regular in shape. In a word, I put it down as the work of a man, not of nature. I scraped off the encrustation of earth, and my knife this time unmistakably rattled on metal. So far, good. I put the metal in my pocket, and resumed my digging. I had by this time worked down to an edge—that is to say, to where the hard surface ceased—and my hopes of discovering this to be a chest increased. I dug along it, and each time my knife slipped off into soft earth. I could feel the wood-work now with my hands. Crouched on my knees in the circumambient darkness of the cavern I greedily toiled, oblivious to all else. . . .

I was conscious of a ray of light, and looked up, wondering that the moonlight had struck through the aperture so opportunely. A shadow loomed behind me; there was a flash and then a report, and I fell forward with a sharp pain in my shoulder. . . .

The bullet fired by my assailant lodged under my left shoulder-blade; but though taken by surprise I did not lose my consciousness. On the contrary, something braced me for the impending struggle. It was pitch dark again, and nothing was visible, nothing

audible. I had lifted myself up, and stood on guard, wrapped in the darkness, listening. I could not even hear breathing, yet I knew the man was in the cave. He too evidently was on guard, waiting. I had carried a revolver ever since we had landed ; but to fire would serve no purpose, and indeed would only disclose me to my enemy. A terrible silence prevailed for five minutes or more. At last I could endure the situation no longer, and I edged slightly away from where I imagined the back of the cavern to rise. This I accomplished without any noise, and so encouraged I repeated the movement. This time my boot kicked with a dull sound against an inequality in the floor, and upon that ensued a report. But the bullet missed me, and by the flame I detected where the other stood. Instantly I fired.

I could not tell what result my shot had, but under cover of the noise I slipped a couple of feet away, and then it occurred to me that he might have pursued similar tactics. To my satisfaction my manœuvre by the merest luck brought me into a position from which the mouth of the cavern was accessible. I could see sideways a vision of blue-black sky and of stars. My best course was the boldest ; I had to take a risk ; with a swift step I darted for the opening, lowering my head as I did so to get through. The crack of my foe's revolver acquainted me that I was visible between the cavern's entrance and himself, but his shot whistled by. It was, however, owing to my increased precipitance at this alarm that I tripped and stumbled, and came

down just over the threshold of the cave and on the outlying floor of the Pulpit.

Before I could recover myself someone was upon me.

I struggled to rid myself of the enemy ; but he was astride me, and held me about the right arm with steel tentacles. My left was underneath, and was practically useless owing to my wound. I felt as I struggled that I was being shoved and dragged, and I suddenly guessed, with something like a chill of the heart, at his purpose. We were slowly approaching the edge of the Pulpit, and below were five hundred feet of space ! I renewed my efforts, and redoubled them. I was frantically aware of my danger, as those slender but remorseless and unyielding arms drew me forward inch by inch. I managed to raise my head and free my left arm, with which I gripped my assailant. He struck at it with the heavy butt of his pistol, and the blow shuddered through every bone ; yet in releasing one arm to do this his grip upon me had weakened. I lifted my head still higher, and wrenched my right arm free of him. All this time no word had passed between us, and only the sound of our struggles and our labouring breath could be heard. In my new position I glanced aside, and to my horror perceived that we were within two feet of the edge. He was straining every muscle to repossess himself of my right arm ; but as if he too had suddenly become aware of our proximity to death he ceased now and exerting himself, pushed me forward. I felt my feet dangling over the edge, and

then I seized him with both arms ; and the damaged one, if it was no longer of active use, could still cling passively. If I were doomed I swore to myself he too should go.

I think he saw my idea in that instant, for he ceased, and began to withdraw himself from my clutches. I held on like a vice, and he squirmed and wriggled. I could feel in his bones and muscles as he fought me that he was no match for me even in my crippled condition. He pulled against me, and I let him go, and jerked after him. This performance I repeated until we were well away from the edge, and then I rolled over, and straddled him by a supreme effort. The low-hung moon distributed but a faint glow, but it was sufficient, lighting that up-turned face.

"Davenant! Good God!" I cried.

The answer panted out of his breathless body: "Herapath!"

I relaxed my grip. "Man, you nearly had us both over. What a tragic mistake!" I exclaimed.

He sat up, breathing heavily. "I thought it was one of the mutineers," he said, "I followed."

"When did you see me?" I asked.

"I saw someone moving upstream, and I tracked you. You vanished up the precipice, and I went after you. I thought you had designs on the treasure."

"Well, so I had," I replied grimly. "Lord, what luck! What luck!" And then I remembered. "The treasure!" I said.

Davenant did not reply for a moment, and when he spoke it was with some significance in his voice.

"Don't you think that you made a mistake—let's call it an error of judgment?"

"How do you mean?" I asked.

"Oh, well, it's of no consequence; it was only an idea. But you see Halliday is the person immediately concerned in the treasure."

"I'm not a formalist," I answered bluntly. "I wish to heaven you'd not been so free with your pop-gun." My shoulder ached bitterly, and my arm was growing stiff.

"My dear sir, how could I tell?" he asked.

"All right," said I. "I'll try to forget it. Anyway, the mischief's done, and so's my error of judgment. The treasure's there."

"Are you sure?" He spoke in a new voice.

"I was just digging about a heavy chest when your infernal pellet took me."

He moved toward the cavern quickly, and I followed.

"Have you matches?" I asked.

"No," he said.

"Mine are gone, but you can feel. It's pretty dark, as you know. I think I can guide you. Here, give me your arm."

We entered stooping, and I felt my way towards the chest, blundering somewhat in the dark.

"Here we are," I said. "Put your hands down there and tell what you make of it."

He bent, and I heard him fumbling in silence.

"It's a chest right enough," he said presently in a low voice.

"Well, we can do nothing more," I remarked. "We've learnt the way up, and that the treasure's here. That's enough for one night. I wish it had stayed at that."

"So do I," he agreed. "My ribs are nearly cracked. Halliday will go wild. He'll dream dreams. Come along."

We passed out into the radiance of the starlight, and began to clamber over the rock behind, which gave access to the broken pathway. I went in front, and Davenant came about a dozen paces in the rear. What with our bruises and our breathlessness and my wound we were neither of us in the mood for conversation, even if that had been advisable. Slowly we groped our way downward by the shelving gutter towards the steeper part of the wall that ascended from the gorge. As I entered this difficult descent at an angle of some eighty degrees I happened to cast a glance backward, and found Davenant's figure had disappeared. I hailed him.

"All right," he said from the invisible. "I twisted my ankle slightly."

I plunged over the verge with all the more caution because of my disabled arm, and slowly, step by step, went down, as though I were descending by so many rungs of a ladder. I had got some distance down when there was a rumble above, and with a rush and a

crash a big lump of rock flashed past me on the right. It shot by too closely to be pleasant, and I called out again.

"Hi! lookout! I'm just below!"

The words were scarcely out of my mouth when a second rock, larger and more formidable than the other, came crashing down upon me. My eyes went up as the noise reached me, and I could see it flying towards me directly in my track. There was no time to spring aside. It had a fierce momentum, and it drove down upon me. I instinctively pressed my head into the wall. . . .

It must have struck a peak just above me. The wind, and sand, and dust, and horror of it were in my face. But it cleared me with a leap that sent it twenty feet beyond, where it bounded and rebounded from the rock face and broke into shivers in the gorge below.

"Good Lord, man," I called out angrily, "this is too hot. You're bent on doing for me to-night."

There was a moment's silence, and then Davenant's voice sailed down to me.

"Good God! Did they touch you? It's my ankle. I dislodged them in the dark."

I grumbled in an indistinct voice, for to say the truth, I was all in a sweat.

"I'll wait for you, by your leave," I called up. "I'm not going to take any more risks."

He joined me soon, descending awkwardly, and limping, and we kept close together during the remainder of the journey down. We reached the bottom

without mishap, and began to wade down the stream towards the camp. Weariness had set in with me, and Davenant did not seem disposed to talk. We successfully made the passage, and entered the zariba. The banners of the dawn were breaking out in the east; and I was dog-tired. I sought my rude shelter, and was soon buried in slumber, oblivious of bruises and wound, and even of my strange discovery.

CHAPTER XV

THE CAPTURE

I AWOKE when the sun was well up, and found the camp in a bustle about me. Davenant had acquainted Halliday with the events of the night, and the news went from lip to lip; our party was all agog. My first sensation was one of extreme pain, which slowly evoked in my mind a recollection of the night's affray. I made my way to McLeod.

"I'm afraid I'm another subject for your scalpel," I said in a feeble jest.

"I've just heard," he returned. "Awkward business it might have been. Let's have a look."

His examination showed no occasion for alarm. At cost of a few sharp pangs the bullet was extracted, and the application he made soothed the wound mightily.

"If they'll leave us alone another day there won't be much the matter with you," he said cheerfully.

Halliday was already bustling about, showing manifest signs of suppressed enthusiasm. He was all over the camp with questions and with orders.

"Say, my scheme's in the cart now," he declared cheerfully. "Your's is the copper-bottomed proposition, I guess. We'll soon run it through. What's the matter with to-night? Anyway, we'll have a conference on this."

He dashed off to make a kindly inquiry about Marley, who was distinctly better, and showed it in a reluctance to remain quiet.

"We're in sight, Mr. Marley; we're right on it," he said, smiling; "and I'm going to let you boys in a bit more. It's taken a heap more getting than I thought, and I reckon it's worth it."

"Good luck, old man," growled Marley. "Sorry I've not been able to do much myself."

At eight o'clock we were hailed from the wood, and looking over the stockade I saw M. Carvaux approaching. He came up, gave a civil bow, and said:

"Can you give me any provisions, monsieur?"

"We can manage it," said Halliday. "Come right along in. This is a great day with us. We're on the treasure."

The Frenchman stared. "Have you found it?" he asked incredulously.

"Why, yes; right away in its crevice, sir, and make no mistake," chuckled Halliday. "Come right along."

Carvaux crossed the barrier with some difficulty, and tapped Halliday on the arm.

"Monsieur, if then this is accomplished, it will be possible to pursue the voyage to Baltimore?" He hesitated, and looked anxious.

Halliday also hesitated; then he spoke in his measured voice. "That's all square. I contracted to take you and your niece to Baltimore, but I didn't say how long it would take or where we went first. It was your own fault, monsieur. You were pressing."

"I do not mind," said the Frenchman, with a gesture, "if it is agreed."

"I reckon Baltimore would maybe suit me as well as any place too," said Halliday thoughtfully. M. Carvaux had, I observed, not yet inquired for his niece. He did not seem a very considerate uncle. She had risen later than the rest of the camp, and came to meet us now, greeting the old man affectionately.

"I'm glad you're safe, my uncle," she said in French.

He wagged his finger at her almost playfully, for he was in a smiling humour. "Ah, it was naughty of you," he replied in the same tongue, "to run away like that into such dangers."

"Herapath, find Mr. Davenant, will you," said the bubbling Halliday, "and we'll fix up things. Lord, this is great!"

"What's the matter?" inquired Miss Sylvester.

McLeod told her the story, and, as I overheard, I'm bound to say he told it generously enough. She came to me a little afterwards, and inquired solicitously after my arm, which was sweet of her. Then we sat down to a cheerful breakfast.

It was difficult to restrain Halliday from rash and immediate action. The cliff beckoned him; his eyes moved to it a dozen times an hour. It was the Mecca of his prayers. It was only by our united persuasion that an attempt upon the treasure was postponed till night. He yielded, however, to the demonstrated risk of an adventure in the daylight, particularly as during

the morning there were renewed signs of the enemy. One or two figures appeared in the clearing, and the smoke of their fires ascended to the blue heaven. Perhaps Clifford and Byrne were allaying their disappointment with cards, but I was certain Crashaw was alert and active; and I had my fears of that oily rascal, Heaven. Davenant was even for delaying the expedition for another day in order to make sure of success; but he was overruled by unanimous voices. We were to set out after dark that evening.

There were certain preparations to be made, which we at once undertook. The idea was to leave the camp in charge of the sentinels, and for the rest of the party to ascend by the bed of the stream and the gorge to the Pulpit. These were to be armed with lanterns and picks and ropes, with which simple equipment it was hoped that our aim could be accomplished. Under the light of the lanterns the picks could unearth the buried chests in the cavern, and then these would be hauled down the steep face of the rocks by means of the ropes. It would undoubtedly prove an arduous task, and might occupy us well into the morning; but it was our one chance, and the prospect of ultimate success sweetened the thought of it.

I say our one chance, because it was becoming evident that our food would not hold out. You will remember that when our expedition to the *Duncannon* failed so miserably we did not return to the cache, where the few remaining provisions were stored. As it fell out, my decision was fortunate, seeing that it enabled us to

arrive in the nick of time. But when I surveyed the larder after breakfast, I confess that I wished we had brought back the stores in the cache. We had decided to hazard all that night, but I could not but ask myself what remained after that. Even if we were successful in recovering the treasure, was our position an enviable one? The mutineers were hostile, and would remain hostile, and the ship was in their hands. Our one base was cut off, and we were practically without food. The outlook was black at the best, unless we were able to make terms.

Yet I do not think that these considerations weighed very much with me; for the fascination of the treasure overpowered all other feelings, and indeed all reason. We were feverishly anxious to be at work, and we awaited the evening with ill-concealed impatience. It was towards midday that a diversion occurred. I was hailed across the barricade from the thick wood by a voice which was unmistakable.

"That you, Herapath? Where's the boss? I've got a proposal to make."

I stared, and made out the figure of Clifford lurking in the bushes. I called to Davenant.

"Here's a bloody mutineer with a proposal," I said loudly. Davenant came up slowly, and stood by my side, staring, also over the brushwood.

"Who is it?" he asked.

"Clifford," I said, "and he's got a proposal. Sounds funny, doesn't it?" I went on cleaning the gun I held. Davenant dropped his eyes to it, and thence to the re-

volver on the grass and to a roughly shaped club I had manufactured.

"We might as well hear it," he suggested.

"As you like. You're in command," I said lightly. "I argue only with these things."

"Well, I'd better hear him," said Davenant doubtfully, and glancing again at my weapons. "You never know."

"Here you are, Clifford," I called. "What do you want? Speak up, and keep your distance, or I'll drill holes in you."

"Cæsar's ghost! What a horrid man!" said Clifford jeeringly. "Cap'n Davenant, I offer terms."

"Terms be damned!" growled McLeod.

"Don't use swear words," urged Clifford sanctimoniously. "Remember the days you spent at your mother's knee, and the Sunday school marm that spanked you. Look here, Davenant, you're in a hole, and we're now engaged in the interesting occupation of starving you out. It's only a matter of days before the last gaunt skeleton staggers on the dying embers of his fire and expires, as per sample. So let's be sensible. I offer Halliday a third to quit the camp; and I'm dog-rotted if it ain't generous."

Halliday, who had joined us, passed his long white hand nervously over his smooth lank hair. "Good Lord!" he was muttering. "Good sakes! A third! O my hat!" He seemed too greatly overcome to make any audible or official retort; and it was Davenant who spoke.

"It isn't likely that Mr. Halliday will agree to——"

"Oh, stow that bilge!" said Marley's deep voice from behind. And we turned, and found him supporting himself on a stick. "Damn it, man, of course, we won't. Don't be mealy-mouthed with the reptile."

"Excuse me, Mr. Marley, I am in charge," began Davenant stiffly, "and I must be allowed to manage things my own way."

"Right, old bird," returned the even-tempered Marley. "I'm not on duty here. But give the bounder his deserts."

Davenant approached Halliday, who was gazing with fascinated amusement at the man who presumed to offer him a third of his own treasure. They spoke together so that I could not hear them.

"If it will anyways make it easier for you, sort of soothe your conscience, I guess you'd better," said Halliday at last.

Davenant mounted the barricade. "Where are you going?" I asked. "Don't fool with that scum."

"I'm only going to parley with him," replied Davenant.

"It's not worth it," said Marley.

"Let him, if it eases his mind," said Halliday, smiling.

"Herapath, I'm relying on your gun," called back Davenant mellifluously as he leaped to earth the other side. I put the barrel over the stockade, and covered Clifford, who was not at all disconcerted.

"All right! Flag of truce," he called out. "I'm fly."

Davenant reached him, walking slowly, and stopped. For some minutes they talked together, and then Davenant turned abruptly away.

"It's not the remotest use," he called back from a little distance. "But I'll communicate what you say." Under our interested eyes he came deliberately back, and climbed over.

"He says they're sure of starving us out," he said to the group, "and he's willing to allow a third of the treasure, and a safe passage to any port desired, providing no report of the voyage is made to authorities."

"Gad, he's a daisy," tolled Marley's bass.

"Oh, give up the farce," I cried, and raised my voice and my gun. "I fire, Clifford, after I count ten. One—two—three—four——"

"Could you do with a bottle of fizz?" he shouted, and was gone; but back from the bush into which he had vanished streamed an echo of song :

"Don't you leave the girl in the lurch,
Take her away right off to church. . .

"He's a daisy," repeated Marley. "God, what cheek!"

"He couldn't have expected we should accept," said Halliday incredulously. "What does he take us for?"

The offer was dismissed with ridicule by all, so deep were we under the influence of that treasure. Only Davenant seemed to be reasonable about it.

"We're not out of the wood by finding that treasure, or even getting it," he said to me later.

I agreed. "But, my dear man," I said, "when we come to straits like these it is sufficient to think ahead twenty minutes. As we've thought ahead till nightfall, we're not doing so badly."

"Do you think we have?" he asked curiously. "Have you inspected the supplies?"

"Yes; they won't last over-to-day; but then *we* mayn't," I said bluntly.

"It would be a good thing to replenish them. There's the cache," he said.

"There's the cache," I agreed. He said nothing for a time; and then:

"I think we ought to make an effort to get the provisions up here," he said significantly. "What do you say to having a shot at it?"

I shook my head. "I daren't risk it," I said.

"Afraid of Clifford's sentries?" he asked coolly.

I felt angry. "A comment of that sort is better not made," I said. "You ought to know better. What I'm afraid of is splitting the party."

"Oh, we're in no danger just now," he said. "They've had their stomach full."

"Anyhow, I'm not going," I remarked. "After to-night, it's another matter. We stand or fall by what happens to-night."

I turned away. "I thought I was in command here," he lisped in his satiric way, "but it seems I'm not."

I was annoyed, although I knew I was technically in the wrong. "My own impression is that Marley's in charge again," I threw back at him.

"When I receive an intimation from him to that effect I'll act on it," he said; and I went away, leaving him the honours of the field. He was as a rule of so neutral a colour that it surprised me to find him assert himself so openly. Nor could I understand why he had so unwarrantably attributed to me a reluctance on the score of my own personal safety. I grew somewhat ashamed of the little squabble when I considered it, which made me all the more relieved that I was able to back him up a little later in what appeared to me an important matter.

Halliday was busy drawing up a scheme for the distribution of his unseen treasure, an elaborate scheme as far as I could make out, in which we were all allotted shares as a joint stock company. He was feverishly anxious to be just, and more than once sounded me as to what I considered I was entitled to. It seemed to me that that was a matter which might very well wait until we were, so to speak, out of the wood, and I told him so bluntly.

"Well," he remarked amiably, "I guess this is little Willie's show. You go right ahead, and I'll answer for the rest."

Accordingly Davenant and I outlined our plan by which the cliff was to be scaled and the booty recovered. Operations were to be started between ten and eleven. And in the late afternoon Davenant brought forward

his proposition—that M. Carvaulx and his niece should withdraw from the camp.

"It will be much safer for you," he told the Frenchman. "Because at any moment we may be exposed to danger here. And I think, in Miss Sylvester's interests, you should withdraw to some temporary place of safety."

I agreed, and added my arguments.

The Frenchman shrugged his shoulders. "I do not fear," he said. "But I do not wish to run unnecessary risks. I have nothing to do with your quarrels. If you would only compose your deferences——" He shrugged again. It was immaterial to him that lives had been lost on either side. He stood aloof, anxious to get on with his journey, and impatient of our delay. He desired us to patch up our foolish quarrel and get to business. "As for this treasure," he pursued, "I have had much experience. During my career as a banker I have had dozens, more than dozens, of people anxious for me to what you call finance their treasure expeditions."

"Well, monsieur," said I, to cut the argument short. "You will go? We will keep in touch with you in case of necessity."

He bowed. "It is very wise," he said. "I will take my niece now. I have no dispute with these sailors yonder."

Miss Sylvester received our decision with a fallen face. "I—I don't want to make a fuss, or to disobey orders," she said hesitatingly, "but I'd much sooner

stay here." Davenant pointed out the danger, and she looked doubtfully at him and then at me. "I'd much rather——" she began; and then suddenly and impulsively: "Do you think it would be better, Mr. Hera-path, for everyone's sake?" she demanded, throwing the decision upon me.

"For everyone's sake," I repeated gravely. "Your uncle has already a hiding-place, and you will have provisions, and we will communicate with you in the morning."

"Very well. I will go," she said quickly, and went straight away to make her preparations, like an obedient child.

It was close on dusk when they left the camp on the eastern side, for M. Carvaulx had constructed in the woods a shelter for himself in that direction the previous night; and then, our fires lit, we settled down to await the hour of the great venture. But half-an-hour had scarcely gone by when a voice, crying far beyond the barricade, reached us. Halliday and I started up.

"What is it?" I called. "Who's there?"

There was a shout, a challenge from the sentry staring at the black wood, and then voices rose together on the evening air.

"It's the Frenchman," called out Carter.

"What is it?" cried Halliday, hurrying to the spot, to which I too hastened.

M. Carvaulx was on his knees, having tumbled over the barricade and caught his foot in the brushwood.

"What has happened?" I demanded.

He was breathless, a little old shrimp of a man in a fright.

"The sailors!" he exclaimed. "The mutineers—the mutineers!"

"For God's sake tell us!" I said roughly in my sudden access of alarm.

"They attacked us. I have no weapon," he exclaimed in staccato sentences. "They were drunk. They knock me down. Ariane is taken. Ah, it is infamous."

"Good Lord!" cried Davenant, and stared at me. "They have the girl, and they are drunk."

"And she threw herself on me, and I advised her to go," I said grimly.

I looked towards the black wood. "I must go, Davenant," I said. "Will you have someone with you?" he asked, without contesting this.

"No, you can't spare anyone; besides, I shall suffice. Good Lord, how I shall suffice when I have them in my hands! I'll tear——" I found myself tearing the stick I held in my hand unconsciously. I think somehow I "saw red" at that moment. I could in my mind's eye see Clifford, that gross reptile, with his hands——

I leapt on the brushwood. "I'll be back in time," I called out as I jumped down.

There was no time to waste. I knew the direction of the Frenchman's shelter, and I made for it through the dark wood. I do not think I had any definite plan in my head, but I was sure I should succeed. And

when I was nearly arrived at the place, my eyes, sharpened by passion, in the obscurity of the wood noted the breakage of some undergrowth, as though by the passage of bodies. I paused, sensed the trail rapidly, and was off upon it westward. The raiders had turned for their camp.

I followed this perceptible track for a quarter of an hour through the trees and shrubs, and then came out on the stream. Opposite I thought I could detect the mark of feet where the party had landed, and I crossed. Yes, the footmarks were manifest. I picked up the scent, and sped onward. I felt in my pocket where my loaded revolver lay, and with my right hand I gripped the heavy club I carried.

And by now real night had fallen, as it falls abruptly in those latitudes, and I had to pick my path with care. No longer was I able to follow the trail, but as I had made up my mind long since that the mutineers' camp was its destination this did not trouble me. I had an excellent sense of topography, and I knew I was steering northwest from the stream, which should bring me into the neighbourhood of the camp. I judged that I should be close on it now, and so I walked warily. The sound of my feet was the only sound audible, for a great stillness appeared to have fallen. Faintly in my ears drummed the sea a mile or more away. The trees were thick together, and the brushwood was heavy. A brooding heat hung in the wood, and the sweat gathered on my forehead. I was possessed of one idea only, and it maddened me. I now began to realise something

of what it all meant. I had not understood, perhaps had not time to understand, my own feelings. When first I had seen Miss Sylvester she had seemed to me but a coquettish girl of a type common to the sex, if singled out by special beauty and a strange grace. Later I had come to appreciate the simplicity and innocence of her girlish nature. And then—— Now I knew indeed, and I ground my teeth at the vision in my brain of that slender form in the hands of those gross sailors, in the power of that black scoundrel Clifford——

I emerged from a covert of bushes slowly, my body taut, my spirit stiffening. The smell of wood fires was in my nostrils. . . . But then a flash was in my eye. The bullet arrived coincidently with the flash of the hammer; but I had by instinct and chance thrown out my club, and it struck that and glanced off. I made two steps forward, and smote.

Someone went down with a smothered ejaculation, but at the same time I was seized from behind. I struggled fiercely; but it seemed as though a score of hands held me, and gradually I ceased. I was taken, caught in the web, and lay as still, as exhausted, and as helpless as a fly.

"Snakes! He's hot stuff!" said Clifford breathlessly. "But we've done him all the same."

"Good old Jacko!" cried Byrne cheerfully.

CHAPTER XVI

ARIADNE

I COULD not make out the separate figures of my captors, who were nothing but a moving knot in the gloom, and I held my tongue, being more anxious to get my breath than to enter into altercations with the mutineers. I had walked into a trap. Of that I was certain. Why else was this strong party—five at least, I reckoned—waiting in ambush?

“Let us get a move on. We’ll be too late for the job at this rate,” said Clifford in a business-like way, which seemed unlike him.

My arms were tied behind me, and a knee was jerked into the small of my back, so that I suddenly had the alternatives of going forward or over. I chose the former, and in comparative silence we penetrated the fastnesses of the forest. Five minutes later we had reached the mutineers’ camp. In the shelter of the bushes and scrub that grew low under the larger trees some huts had been constructed, and I was hurried into one of these, before which a fire was blazing merrily. Stakes were driven into the earth in four separate places, and to these I was pegged out by hands and ankles, so that I was unable to do more than move my body an inch or so any way. This operation was superintended by Crashaw, who eyed me the while with the

cold eye of a butcher contemplating his victim. In the distance I heard Clifford and Byrne talking.

"How goes the enemy? Well, that makes it an hour, doesn't it? We must be on time."

"That back way," said Byrne's voice, "was a great find."

"Immense," agreed the other. "Barney, we'll have a tot to celebrate this. Where did we put that bottle of O-be-joyful?"

There came to me the noise of someone groping among the grasses, for the camp was wonderfully silent. I marvelled. The mutineers were on the eve of some venture, just as we were. What could that be but an attack on the zariba? And how was it that they knew about the back way to the Pulpit? I was puzzled even while I chafed at my impotence. I heard someone approach me.

"How's the brigadier?" inquired Clifford cheerily. "Glad that wasn't me you hit. I hoped it was Crshaw. He's getting a bit lofty, and wants his hair combed." He sat down near me, and bit off the end of a cigar. "You owe me one, Herapath," he resumed. "Don't be sulky. They wanted something with boiling oil in it, but I fell on my knees and begged your life. 'No,' says I; 'he's a philosopher as well as a bruiser. Let him philosophise; give him time to meditate on the vanity of human wishes. Slow rises worth by poverty depressed,' says I. 'Peg him out for a period of prayer and recreation. He hasn't had a holiday for a long time, and has earned one, he has.'"

He laughed, and held the match he had struck so that he could see my face.

"'You are my honey—honeysuckle. I am your bee,'" he sang briskly. "You shouldn't order have done it, Herapath, at your time of life. I put it to you anxiously: was the gal worth it?"

"She is here?" I asked quickly, breaking silence for the first time. He lighted his cigar, so that the match flamed red on his brick-red face.

"We've fixed up the little angel for a spell like you," he said indifferently. "Unfortunately, I can't afford to pay her the attentions proper to her rank and beauty; but a time will come, and once aboard the lugger——"

He made a gesture which drove me to madness. I strained at my ropes, and they bit deep into me.

"Comfortable?" he asked mercilessly. "Both doing well? That's all right. Nothing would have pleased me more than to have had a nice little chat with you, Mr. Herapath, but, unfortunately, I haven't time. I've an appointment. But I'll drop in some day soon, and we'll fix it up."

"Look here, man," I said, restraining myself, "do you mean me to believe that Miss Sylvester is roped down in the same way as I am?"

"Allee same you," he nodded. "You see, we're off on an important engagement, old cock, and we can't afford to leave our guests exposed to risks. So we've put cruel gyves about her little tootsies, and——"

I strained fiercely. "Steady on!" he urged.

"Somehow I thought we should fetch you by taking the lady. Neat scheme, wasn't it? Mine."

The trap was manifest enough now, and yet how could I have avoided it in the circumstances? I growled an oath under my breath.

"Who's that swearing?" said the insufferable Clifford sternly. "I won't have it in this camp." Byrne joined him now in the firelight, and the two contemplated me.

"It's a mighty fine compliment to you, Herapath," said the new-comer. "You can comfort yourself with that. We wouldn't have taken the trouble for any of the others. We laid for you."

"Smoke that all night," said Clifford serenely. "It will be as soothing as a fragrant Havana. Incidentally, Barney, this weed is no great shakes."

"Well, whose fault is it?" asked the Irishman. "You looked after the food and the liquor and all."

"Talking of food and liquor," said Clifford, addressing me, "we expected you to make a raid on the cove this afternoon. But you hadn't the pluck, V.C."

It crossed my mind as I lay there helpless and hopeless that they seemed very well informed of our intentions. Davenant had urged me to make this very expedition. Clifford rose.

"We've got half-an-hour yet," he remarked as he strolled off, and I was left to the misery of my own reflections.

The garrison of our camp was not anticipating an

assault, and it was now the weaker by my absence. Moreover, Miss Sylvester lay close by, probably in the neighbouring hut, and in the shameful bondage which held me. These were two reasons why I should rack my brains and my muscles in an attempt to get free. But I saw no way, and in sheer despair I desisted, my mind a futile pulp of vague thought, my body full of aches and pains. Presently the voices of the mutineers beyond the fire reached me.

"Don't swipe any more, Jacko. We mustn't keep Davenant waiting."

Keep Davenant waiting! The words burned in my head.

"Oh, let him fry cheese," said Clifford. "I'm running this show. He's not got nerve enough."

I cannot tell you my sensations as these words fell on my ears. It was as if a whole house had tumbled in ruins on me, as if the world had by a dreadful accident suddenly turned topsy-turvy. And then, as my mind under the impulse of its amazement played rapidly on the situation, a flood of light swept quickly over the past, illuminating all the dark places. I understood. Davenant was a traitor.

Little things, big things, things of no import, which have no place in this narrative; things of great moment, which had been grievously misinterpreted—all became invested with new significance now. Clifford had been the open mutineer; Davenant was the silent plotter. From the very first I seemed now to trace Davenant's guilt. It was he who had apparently made the mistake

about the island; it was he who had endeavoured, against my desire, to steam away, and thus maroon Halliday and Wade and Marley, whose presence was dangerous to the plot. It was he, once more, who had striven with me on the ledge and tried to throw me over the precipice. There came back to my memory those tumbling rocks which so nearly committed me to death. It was he who had wished to send me to the cove, where, no doubt, a *posse* had been awaiting me. It was he—— Ah, it was at his instance the Frenchman and Miss Sylvester had been despatched out of the camp to safe quarters. Safe quarters! I could recall the picture of Davenant and Clifford conferring outside the camp, while we, deluded fools, looked on in placid ignorance of what they were plotting.

And now Davenant had communicated to them our intentions, and they were to assault the camp by arrangement with him. And I not there! There was bitter gall in the thought. We had all played the fool, but most of all I, who was doubly in their toils. Miss Sylvester had been the bait for me. I came out of this fierce mood of despair to hear the voices round the fire louder.

“I’ll play you for the girl, Jacko.”

Clifford had the cards. “I’ll cut, toss, or fight you for her, Barney, my boy,” said the ruffian. “She’s a knock-out. ‘She’s a daisy, she’s a ducky, she’s a lamb.’ Look here, Barney, let’s draw for the Queen of Hearts—that’s her—come along. We’ve got ten minutes. Pass the bottle round, my boys.

'Bacchus only drinks like me
When Ariadne's coy.'

But when the time comes I'll forswear sack. Ace of hearts, by thunder!"

It was diabolical to have to lie there and listen to these vile exchanges. There was something like a menace in the conversation, which made my blood sour, but I was as helpless as a log.

"That's warm, Jacko," said Byrne. "Knave!"

The drawing went on, punctuated with coarse jokes, oaths, and innuendoes, until at last Clifford gave vent to a laugh.

"Great Cæsar! She wasn't in the pack. Now, how the devil did that happen?"

"Well, it was my draw, Jacko," said the Irishman, "and so I claim the stakes."

"See you canned first," exclaimed Clifford. "Let's try again. Halloa! Is it time, Crashaw?"

A third voice joined the others, and I heard no more for a time, since their tones dropped lower. But presently Clifford called out:

"All right. Settle that. I'll have a look at Hercules." He came over to me, entering the open side of the hut.

"Samson, I've come to say ta-ta," he said, "and I've got a bit of parting advice for you. Ware woman as you ware wine. I daresay Delilah was a damned handsome jade, but she wasn't worth it; and here's a word in your ear." He stooped and whispered, and in my black rage I could have torn him in pieces. He drew

back as I struggled. "Nebuchadnezzar! Here's a regular Gaza," he said breezily. "Tatcho, my elegant warrior; which sounds like a sneeze, but being interpreted is 'Keep your hair on.' So long!"

His retiring steps lessened in my ears as I slowly drilled myself to a more level temper. It was difficult; but I grew master of myself, knowing that I could do nothing by sheer blind fury. The camp sank into deep silence, and only the distant noise of the breaking sea reached me. I set myself to earnest and desperate thought. I reviewed the past with all its misapprehensions and blunders; I faced the future with all its doubts and darkness. It seemed months since Wade and I had started with such light hearts from Southampton that misty evening; and Wade was in his island grave, and here was I stretched out like a criminal of old to die on the rack of starvation, or maybe by a more merciful pistol shot. I guessed that they had no use for me, and I wondered why they had so far spared my life. I have since come to the conclusion that my knowledge of engineering had some influence with these scoundrels. I was to be reserved for eventual disposal; but in the meantime there was the *Duncannon* to work, and not one of the mutineers had any knowledge of machinery.

At any rate, I had been spared so far, but it was as bitter as death to lie there hour after hour, and watch the stars go past, and the heavens cloud and clear, and the pines rustle in the sea winds, and the flame leap on the rough rafters of the hut. I fought long and

intermittently, raising first one shoulder and then the other a little way off the ground. But all my efforts were in vain. My bonds and the deeply driven stakes held. I remained a prisoner, ignominiously secure to the earth. My thoughts, moving in this sickness of the mind, reverted to Davenant, the sleek traitor, the doubly damned, and I felt that if it were possible I would gladly have pulled over the pillars of Gaza, to which Clifford had alluded, on his treacherous head, even were I involved in the ruin myself. And then, again, Miss Sylvester—what was to be her fate?

In those watches of that terrible night I realised my heart, and I knew that I loved her. Yet I, who would have laid down my life at her feet, was unable to put one finger to her assistance. . . .

Orion lay far in the west. I knew the dawn was near . . . and suddenly I heard a cry, a cry of fear, of mingled terror and supplication; and it was the cry of a woman. There was but one woman on that island of despair. I lifted my head, and listened, every pulse in my body seeming to have stopped. The cry was raised again, and it appeared to sound near me. Was it Ariadne crying for help, and crying in vain? A madness seized me, greater than I had ever before experienced. I put forth all my strength; the muscles in my arms stiffened into lumps of iron; the blood poured into my face and brain. And still I wrenched . . . and all of a sudden the stake on my right gave.

With a repetition of the effort it came slowly out of

the earth in which it had been buried. My arm was free.

With tremulous fingers I sought my pocket, and found there the knife, which in their certainty of my secure fastening, they had not troubled to remove. With it I shored through the ropes that bound my left arm, and then repeated the operation on the ropes that held my feet. I cut away the wreckage, and rose to my feet, a man once more, a man with a giant's strength because of the thoughts that moved like flame with him. I caught up the stake, a heavy billet of wood, damp from the earth, and I stalked out into the light of the fire.

The cry had come from my right, and I directed my steps thither, to a hut like my own, such as I had already noticed. I reached the entrance, on which the light of the great fire flickered weakly, and in the flashes I made out the figure of a woman on the ground, and that of a man who stood over her. A low cry went to my heart. I stepped in, and raised my billet. The next moment the sound of my feet had come to his ears, and he turned, and a revolver belched in my face. The bullet whistled past my neck, and then my billet fell. It fell on his right arm, and broke it like a cracked stick above the elbow. He shrieked with the pain, and made a rush for the back of the hut. Between the flashing and dropping of the firelight I had glimpses of him. He dashed from wall to wall, his arm hanging helpless, his hand still nervelessly grasping the revolver. He ran about, squealing like a rat, and he trampled on

the girl as he ran. I shouted, and, stimulated possibly by his panic, he suddenly put out his left hand, and seized the weapon from the dead right hand. It was levelled, and he was firing as I raised my billet again; and he dodged——

He pitched sideways with no cry, only with a little dropping bump into the darkness of an unlit corner of the hut. My stake had taken him behind the ear, and he had died instantaneously. There lay the man with the ugly dead face that we had commented on early in the voyage, and the face that pressed the cold earth in that rough shelter was really a dead face now. For it was Heaven, the steward, who had been a confederate of the mutineers from the outset.

Ariadne Sylvester was whimpering at my knee.

"Oh, save me! Where is that man? He frightened me. Oh, he was terrible! I knew you would come. I knew—where is that man?"

"He will frighten you no more—never any more," I said, comforting her.

"Is he dead? Have you killed him?" she asked in an awestruck voice. She was still trembling, clinging to me. "I'm glad he's dead," she breathed; and then, her face panting up to mine, she collapsed on my breast.

I let her come to of her own accord, having carried her away from that hut into the shelter of the wood. She emerged from her swoon with a long sigh, and the first thing she saw was my face above hers, watching it with anxiety. The stars were paling before the shafts of the new dawn, and her face was dimly luminous.

An expression which was not a smile, but mere content, passed over it.

"I'm glad it's you," she whispered.

I pressed the arm which was supporting her closer.

"Do you remember when we walked this way once?" she asked after a pause, and was silent, as if she puzzled to herself.

"Don't bother to talk," I told her soothingly.

"No, no. I must," she said almost fretfully. "I wanted to tell you. I remember walking," she said slowly, "and it was night; and those men were about; and you—yes, you struck one as you struck——" She shuddered, and ceased. "Why do you hold me?" she asked.

"You fainted," I said. "But you're better now."

"Is that all?" she asked in the slow voice she had been employing. "Is that all?"

I drew her nearer. I thought she wandered, and I was afraid. Had the strain been too much for her brain?

"Why do you press me like that?" she asked again, slowly.

"Because—oh, because I love you," I cried, forgetful of all else, save that I did love her and that she was in my arms. She put out hers towards me.

"That's what I wanted to say," she whispered, pulling my face down to hers. "It was on that night it happened. I loved you then. It was then. I can see it now. For I felt—I feel it more now; and that's how I know it. Oh, I'm glad you love me."

I kissed her lips softly, gently, and she sighed her

soul towards me. Whatever might be the fate of that hapless expedition, I, at the least, was indebted to it for more than life.

I laid her down on her ferny bed, and stood up, to regain the mastery of myself. About me spread the wonder of the dawn, which grew sensibly into morning. The greyness was slipping from a sky that was flushed with gold and rose towards the orient, and the sea alone was drab, darkly drab from the opacity of its depth. The firs and the palms that surrounded me like upstanding giants whistled in the breeze that blew off the water. And out of the innumerable crepitations of the twilight in the undergrowth sprang the strident but triumphant voice of a parrakeet. I turned my eyes again seaward, and absorbed the rare fine air in what was no less than an ecstasy of mind and emotion. I was like one taken out of the rough circumstances of this rude world and rapt to heaven. I was Nympholept, and, behold, at my feet, recumbent, silent, and with wet lashes over deep and tired eyes, was Ariadne of the Island, yet no desolate Ariadne derelict and tear-stained, but one blooming, even through her terrors, into the flower of full life and happiness. I looked down on her, and she stirred and looked up at me.

"You must rest, sweetheart," said I.

"I will go with you," she whispered.

"No," said I. "I have stern work. You have seen enough, too much. You must rest."

"What will you do?" she asked anxiously. "You won't——"

"I must visit our camp and see what has happened. I fear the worst. I have discovered many things during this terrible night, and I am afraid. Ah, but I have discovered a wonderful thing too!" I cried, stooping to her, and gathering her in my arms. I kissed her damp eyes, and she crept closer.

I stood up, and faced the dawn, which came with growing beauty. Away on the broad and neutral plain of the sea was a dark smudge visible against the gradual light of the east. I stooped again, picked up Ariadne in my arms, and carried her deeper into the recesses of the opening in which we had sought refuge. It was like a small gravel quarry, in the side of the slope on which we were, and was grown plentifully with bushes.

"You are safe here, sweet," I told her. "I will return very shortly."

"But you will not—you will take care," she pleaded, clinging to me.

I felt in my coat pocket for the knife, and gave it to her. As I did so something tumbled out of the pocket to the ground. But I was in too great a flutter to give heed to this.

"I will take care, child," I said. "And see, I leave you my knife. No one will seek you here, but this will give you a greater sense of security."

I comforted her fears, kissed her, disengaged myself from her arms, and fled.

From the quarry-like refuge I made straight for the mutineers' camp. I was without weapons of any kind,

and I remembered the revolver of the wretched Heaven. The light of the morning was full on the hillside when I reached it, and the fire was dying into its embers, as if it had been a wild thing that feared the day and crept to earth. There was no sign of life anywhere; but the light had found its way into the recesses of the hut, and a shaft played weakly on the dead man's face with its glassy eyes. With a shudder I withdrew the revolver from his stiff fingers, and secured the cartridges also. Then, thus armed for emergencies, I set out for the stream.

When I had crossed it I approached our old camp with caution, for I did not know what might have happened. But I saw nothing to alarm me, and so noiselessly reached the barricade. No one was visible, and the fires here also were failing. I climbed the brushwood, revolver in hand, but was challenged by none. It was as the camp of the dead. Presently, I noticed the body of a man lying in an awkward heap, with his face to the sky. I recognised him as one of the mutineers. So our party had made a gallant fight of it. I could not doubt what had happened. Overpowered and surprised by the superior numbers of their opponents, Halliday and McLeod and Marley had fallen victims to the treachery of Davenant and the ferocity of the mutineers. I glanced up at the Pulpit, and my eyes detected some figures crawling on the cliff like flies. The treasure was in their hands. Sick at heart, I entered the central hut, which Halliday had occupied, and as I did so a groan reached me.

I looked carefully about me, and discovered Halliday securely fastened, hand and foot. I had only just time to release him when in the farther corner I saw another figure. On examination this proved to be McLeod, similarly bound. I cut his bonds also, and presently he had recovered enough to sit up, chafe himself, and tell his story. Poor Halliday was only half-conscious owing to a severe blow on the head. The mutineers, according to McLeod, had made the assault at ten o'clock, just as the start was being made on the expedition. It came with dramatic unexpectedness, and the issue was never in doubt from the first. They had attacked from the stream, and seemed to be aware of our dispositions. McLeod seemed puzzled by this, but it was no source of wonder to me with my newly acquired knowledge of Davenant.

"We made a struggle for it," said McLeod sadly. "But it was a one-sided business. Halliday went down at once, and Collins and one of the stokers were shot. I didn't see Marley."

"I must look," I said, rising, for my own tale could wait. "Just give a glance at Halliday, while I search the camp."

I went out, and succeeded in discovering Marley also bound, and swearing like a trooper. Near by was Collins, with a bullet in his thigh, and a resigned expression on his face. Carter had been clubbed with a gun, and was secured like the others. There was no sign of the Frenchman. Thus our party was reduced to McLeod, Carter, and myself, able-bodied members,

if we omit Marley, who was still something of an invalid, Halliday, and Collins, and the remaining hand, more or less *hors de combat*—in all seven. I made out that the mutineers must, at least, count ten ashore, to say nothing of those who had seized the ship. It was impossible for us to continue the unequal struggle; there was nothing before us but capitulation. These thoughts were moodily in my head while we were mustering our little company of wounded and broken men. Luckily for himself, Halliday had not realised his position, and was only half alive.

"It's all up," said McLeod bitterly.

"I'd like to have just one more go at the blighters," said sick Marley in his growling voice.

I was looking upward at the Pulpit, where the crawling flies were visible at work.

"No," said I. "You're off duty, and I command here. We're going."

A shrill cry, a squeal as of a bird that flew in the heaven overhead, came down to us. "What's that?" asked McLeod.

"Good God!" exclaimed Marley. "It's a man! It's——"

We held our breath; a fly had been detached from the height, and was falling. . . . It struck the rocks below the Pulpit, just where Wade had fallen.

Marley's face was livid, and McLeod's natural red colour went. Overhead the ruffians were fighting, maybe in their greed of gold.

"Yes, I guess we'll go," said Marley, and turned away.

We got the remnant of the camp together, and started at once, going down by the stream, McLeod supporting Halliday, Collins tottering weakly, and Carter aiding the other wounded man.

"I guess they've done for that poor devil Davenant," remarked Marley pensively.

"Not a bit of it," said I. "That's my story, which you haven't heard; and it's another reason why we should reckon it's all up. Davenant's one of them. It was his treachery that caused the attack last night."

Amazement and incredulity followed on this statement, but I educed my arguments and my evidence, and they were silent. They did not even seem to have spirit left to stigmatise properly so base and cowardly and traitorous a scoundrel.

"The Frenchman's gone," said Marley feebly. "Is he in it too?"

"No; I can't believe that," I said. "I should say he had run away. He's not a combatant, and he would not think he was called upon to fight for us."

We were bound for the creek, where, it will be remembered, we had concealed our boat, and by the time our explanations had been exchanged we had almost reached it. A heavy gloom rested upon us. We were defeated, and had but a hopeless outlook. I was roughly projecting a plan in my mind, but that was by no means a solution of our difficulties. We had lost the treasure; we were a broken party, with several wounded

to embarrass us; and we had lost our line of retreat. It remained only that we should find our way back to the cove in which we had landed at the outset, where we should, at least, be supplied with stores for the time being. After that—well, it would serve no good purpose to look too far ahead in that hour of despair.

We emerged from the undergrowth and came out upon the sandy margin of the little creek. As we did so, a cry of amazement issued from Marley. I followed his gaze; and there in the offing, her twin black funnels throwing clouds astern, was a big steamer.

CHAPTER XVII

THE SIX PALMS

WE stood staring for some minutes in silence, for the surprise had been complete; and now I recalled that smudge of darkness I had seen earlier upon a neutral purple water. She must have been making a smart passage to have come up so soon. I judged she was distant about four miles, but she was drawing rapidly nearer. The appearance of the steamer opened up new avenues of thought, and our hearts lifted.

"God's providence! By George, it is!" exclaimed Marley. McLeod, looking out under the hollow of his palms, said with characteristic caution:

"She won't be coming here; she'll be going about, and will pass four miles off at least."

"We must signal at once," I said, and began to go about the creek for materials for a fire.

"The boat!" exclaimed Marley, "that's our ticket. They'll see a boat if we put up a signal from it."

He scurried off to its hiding-place under Carter's guidance, while I quickly made calculations. It would take me fifteen minutes at least to reach the place in which I had left Ariadne, so that more than half-an-hour would necessarily elapse before the boat could start. I told McLeod exactly how things stood, and

he agreed that it would be well to light a bonfire as an alternative signal to the steamer, even at the risk of attracting the attention of the mutineers.

"Get all aboard and ready to start directly I get back," I said as I hurried away.

I ascended the stream by the left bank as speedily as I could, and when I paused to take breath it was upon a little elevation. The sweat was running down my face, for the sun, young as it was, streamed down roughly in those latitudes. I turned to get the sea wind, and saw the strange steamer still at her original distance from the island, and I wondered if she were going to anchor. Halliday's story of the chart, and the old man and his nephew in New Zealand, returned to my memory. Was it possible, I asked myself, that here was a second expedition after the treasure?

Suddenly I heard the sound of angry voices raised in shouting, which came from the hills, and I guessed that the mutineers were quarrelling. I resumed my way with increased speed, resolved that nothing should come between me and my mission. Soon I recognised a palm-tree, and presently I was in the recess among the bushes where my love awaited me. She sprang to me joyously.

"Oh, I'm so glad you've come safely," she cried. "I was afraid——"

"Hush!" said I softly, holding her to me; for at that moment there was in my ears a noise.

It grew louder into a shouting; and then I heard the

sound of feet heavily pounding on the earth, and the cracking of branches, as if a body was pushing through the undergrowth in haste.

We listened in silence, for the noise approached us. "We are safe," I whispered. She squeezed my arm, as if to reassure me that she was not afraid.

The noise now came nearer, and I heard an oath. Someone was blundering down upon us. I drew my revolver and waited. There were more sounds from above, and then a voice:

"Damnation, and all for a cellar of bally empties!"

I knew that voice. It was Clifford's. What did it signify?

"Here, give me a shove, will you?" it proceeded. "My foot's caught." And there was muttering, and a crack, and another voice, the namby-pamby voice of Davenant, the traitor.

"It may be bad, but it will be worse if we don't take care. If they attract the attention of that vessel we're done. Come along, sharp."

"How the hell did they get loose?" grumbled Clifford, and the voices and the footsteps blundered away into the distance.

I was aware by now that my task was not so easy as it had promised to be. What exactly had happened was by no means clear, but I made a guess at it. The mutineers had been disappointed in the treasure; possibly it had not come up to their expectations; and now they were frightened by the strange vessel. Our party had got free, and being in possession of a boat, might

succeed in reaching the steamer. In that case the plight of the gang was desperate, and Davenant knew it. I could picture them all in a wild and frantic rush to the sea. What was their object? They had their boat somewhere. They could either gain the shelter of the *Duncannon*, and run for it, which was a counsel of despair, or they could try to prevent our party from communicating with the stranger. That was their more likely course, and explained this precipitate race for the sea. It also gave me pause. How was I to conduct Ariadne to the boat in safety with those turbulent and unscrupulous ruffians between?

I was sorely perplexed, but there was no time to pause. I must act at once; and so we began to hasten in the wake of the mutineers towards the creek, keeping a wary watch for the enemy.

We penetrated the undergrowth for ten minutes in silence, and at last came out on a rise which was bare of vegetation. The sun dazzled the eyes, and leapt in sparkling flashes on the sea below. The steamer in the offing caught my sight, and away to the left the *Duncannon* at anchor. A great clamour came back to us, for we were now not more than a quarter of a mile from the creek. And as I looked I was astonished to see a boat put out from beneath the fringe of under-wood that bounded my vision and creep upon the face of the sea. The shouting increased in volume into a confused pandemonium of sound.

"What is it?" asked Ariadne, clutching me.

"It is our boat," said I, straining my eyes. "I can

recognise Marley, and that must be Halliday in the bows. They've put out to avoid being attacked."

But still I could not understand the situation. Why were they not being pursued? I expected every moment to see the second boat leap after the first, but it did not, and I wondered if by chance the mutineers had their boat on a remoter part of the island; in which case the odds were in favour of our friends. But as I gazed, fascinated, the uproar of fury did not abate on the beach, and now, in sweeping the purview with my glances, I was aware of a second boat that crawled under the shadow of the bluff eastward. It was tenanted, as I could make out in the strong light, by one man only. What did it mean? Was it possible that this was the mutineers' boat? At a loss what to make of it all, I gazed. The boat with the single occupant having made the bluff now turned, and stood out to where the tramp lay, swinging at anchor. It must, then, be one of the mutineers, who had stolen his comrades' boat.

But now my thoughts came back to our position. We were left upon the island with the infuriated mutineers. I could not doubt that Marley and McLeod had waited for us as long as they had dared to do, and I could not blame them that they had pushed off. It was their manifest duty, as the capture of the boat by the gang would have been fatal to us all. Besides, it had been arranged that we should proceed to the cove. Thither, therefore, I must forthwith convey Ariadne, and to do so in safety, obviously we must travel along

the backbone of the hills, away from the more open strand and seaboard. I explained to her what must be done.

"I trust you," she said, gazing at me earnestly, as a child might gaze at its father. "I know you can do anything. I am not afraid." Suddenly she put her hand to her bosom. "But see; I forgot. What is this? It fell out of your pocket when you gave me the knife. And I opened it. There is an old piece of paper in it."

I took it from her, and recognised now that this must be the hard object I had dug out of the cavern on the Pulpit. I turned it over, and scratched it with the knife. It was metal, and, it seemed, silver. It looked like an old silver snuff-box. The lid gaped, for dirt in the hinges would not allow of its being fully closed down again. I opened it, and drew out a discoloured, mouldy piece of paper. It was not more than three inches long, but was almost as thick as cardboard, and had been doubled. I straightened it out curiously.

It was dulled with age and earth stains, but there were certain marks upon it, discernible at once. On examining these closely I made out big clumsy lettering slantwise:

FOR JAKE.

Below this the paper was black with grime, but a certain amount of loose dirt which was its envelope flaked to the touch of the fingers, and I could perceive that

the lettering continued, still in that gross uneducated hand.

...oved Headland 6 Palms, N.N.W. 7 foot. Jan. 18...

Nothing was distinguishable after that, for all ended in a great blur. What did it signify? Ariadne at this moment uttered a little cry, and drew my attention from the paper.

"Look," she cried.

I glanced out to sea, and saw that our boat was some way off the island, but in the distance the stranger steamer seemed very dim. Would they be able to attract her attention?

"What shall we do?" she asked, putting her arm in mine confidently. "They have left us."

"Child, are you afraid?" I asked.

She shook her head, smiling. "Not with you."

My gaze fell again upon the snuff-box and the paper in my hands.

"Let me tell you something," I said in a quiet voice. "When I gave you that knife this fell from my pocket. I had forgotten it was there. I dug it up the night before last in the cavern of the Devil's Pulpit. I was digging for treasure, and I came upon this. I thought it was a stone—anything. I thought no more about it. You opened it, dear, and I find it is a snuff-box. It must be over a hundred years old; and it was buried with the treasure."

"Ah, but there is no treasure," she said.

"No; the mutineers found the chests empty," I said.

"But it is clear that there was treasure there once. It was doubtless used by the men who had possession of the chart during the last century. Can you explain this, Ariadne mine?—'For Jake, oved Headland 6 palms, N.N.W. 7 foot. Jan. 18?'"

"What does it mean?" she asked, her dainty brows in a frown.

"I'm guessing, Ariadne mine; but this is my guess: I've got into fairyland this past night. I stand now in faery with the queen of that divine kingdom. Will she deign to give me her hand?" I took it, and drew her nearer, so that her fair head rested on my shoulder. "If one day, sweetheart, an adventurer had come to the conclusion that the hoard was in too inaccessible a position, might he not have removed it? 'Oved'; observe. Moved might lie in that. Jake might be a friend, a partner. And the rest, the rest that is decipherable, N.N.W.—a headland—and six palms and—well, I can't guess any further, and the date is incomplete. What think you of that, my Queen of Faery? Anything may happen in this wonderful world." I kissed her softly, and she lifted her glowing eyes to me.

"The treasure!" she panted.

"The treasure," I said, and looked out again to sea. "They are making signals to the steamer, and if they get her attention she will put back and rescue us. We are safe for the present, and in any case we would be better away from here. Marley will expect us at the cove, where the steamer will undoubtedly call. In the meantime——"

"You mean we will make the venture—that paper?" she interrupted eagerly.

"If you will, my dearest."

"I will go to the world's end with you," she said simply.

Holding her hand, I pulled out my watch, and glanced at the position of the sun. I made a rough calculation. "Our way lies over the spur yonder," I said. "It's not so difficult as eastward, and we shall be out of the way of the mutineers."

Suddenly Ariadne looked at me piteously. "Oh, how hungry I am!" she said. "I've just found it out."

"I'll promise you a breakfast," said I, "in an hour's time. Come."

We set out at once, and when we reached the mutineers' camp I left her and turned into it to forage. I avoided the hut in which the dead Heaven lay, but found another in which were some tins of food and some bottles. I took as many of the former as I could carry, and put a bottle of whisky into my pocket; and then I rejoined Ariadne, and we resumed our gradual ascent. We halted an hour later on the heights by a little gushing waterfall to eat and rest. I filled a gourd, which I scooped out, with sparkling water from the stream, emptied a little whisky into it, and bade Ariadne drink it. This she did with a wry face, but she had had so terrible an experience during the last twelve hours that I thought the stimulant was necessary. She was bearing up bravely under the stress of excitement, but it

was possible at any moment that she might collapse. After resting for half-an-hour in the flickering shadows and the cool air we resumed our way, and that, with the vision of the boat like a dot below and the distant steamer with its trail of smoke, was the last we saw of the southerly sea for some time.

Immediately afterwards we began to go down into a pleasant valley. The sky was full of clouds charged with light, and as we descended we were aware of a sensible warmth. To the extreme west, as we could now see, the island terminated in a rude and wooded bluff, but that clearly could not be the headland of the paper, for it was nearly due west of the Pulpit. Between where we were and this terminal bluff rolled a deep wooded valley, upon the eastern slopes of which we walked. It was pretty evident to me that our headland was, therefore, eastward of the valley; and accordingly we corrected our direction. The woodland was fairly open, and gave wonderful vistas of sea and hill and valley. Behind us were the lofty summits of the craggy hills surrounding the Devil's Pulpit. We quickened our pace, and soon emerged upon a plateau scattered with trees and bare of undergrowth. The sea winds, I think, reigned here, blowing sharply at times from their northern home, for the trees were twisted and gnarled as if driven in from the sea cliffs. I cast back my eyes, and the cone of the Pulpit arrested them. As near as I could determine it we were N.N.W. from that tragic eminence. And here was a headland. My heart beat the faster.

We walked forward towards the verge of the cliff, and standing, I looked down upon two hundred feet of space to the white lather of the water on the rocks.

"You are not afraid, child?" I asked, holding out my hand to her.

"Never with you," she said gladly, and came to my side and peered down. "I am not afraid with you," she repeated. "See, dear, I give witness to my love and faith. If I looked down from a high window I shivered; I cannot bear heights. Yet I look down these horrible depths without a tremor—with you."

I lifted her face and kissed her, there in the eye of those dizzy heights, and then we turned and went back. It was Ariadne who spoke.

"The six palms!"

Her face was alive with excitement; she pointed. I followed her hand; and surely enough a grove of date palms rose a hundred yards away, where the saddle of the headland began to give upon the valley. We both broke into a run, holding hands, and came up panting.

Five tall palms, sheering inward away from the sea winds, enclosed a circle; and the stump of a sixth remained to speak of its fate in some gale, long past and gone, that had ravaged that promontory.

"Oh, your paper was right!" cried Ariadne ecstatically. I took it out of the silver snuff-box, and scrutinised it once again.

"Seven feet."

I threw a glance at the ground enclosed by the rough circle of the palms. It was overgrown with grass and

low trailing shrubs. The circumference I estimated at about sixty feet, and the radius was, therefore, nearly twenty. If the treasure was there it was doubtless concealed in the chests in which it had been removed. But was it there? As I mused a notion came into my head. There would be several chests, and perhaps they began to be buried seven feet from the circumference? I went down the slope to where the vegetation grew more luxuriously, followed by the eager Ariadne, and I cut a big stick, making the thick end into a pointed stake.

"Cut me one; oh, do cut me one!" pleaded my dear. And so I cut her one and, armed with these instruments, we climbed back to the circle of palms to dig! First, I measured seven feet from the circumference, and then, having cleared away grasses and trailing undergrowth, I began to dig with my stake. It was hard work, and it was slow work. The sun was high now and we laboured in a tropical heat tempered only by the in-blowing sea breeze. Soon Ariadne tired, for she was in no physical condition to stand arduous work just then, and I was left to continue by myself. At a depth of between two and three feet I struck something hard, and at once proceeded to open a bigger hole for the purposes of inspection. This took me half-an-hour, but by the end of that time I was rewarded by bringing to light the iron-bound lid of a heavy chest.

Ariadne cried out in her excitement, clapping her hands like a child. I cleared still more of the earth away, and forced the lock. The chest was now com-

pletely dug about, and I tried to raise the lid. It resisted all my efforts, and so I was driven back on my resources. I was resolved to test the cache to the full, remembering the bitter disappointment of the mutineers. I now went again into the wood, and returned with a long stout pole, which I had broken from a sapling. I inserted this in a crack of the lid, and using it as a lever, slowly put my weight on it. With a rending sound the wood gave way, and the lid, torn from the lock, prized open. Ariadne leaned over the hole flushed and tremulous. The chest was full to the brim.

Coins of all kinds were there, gold, silver, and copper, guineas and louis d'or, pieces of eight, moidores, and doubloons; and mingling with them was a confusion of precious stones, pearls, diamonds, rubies, and sapphires in rings, necklaces, and brooches—all piled in a heap, the spoil of those dead Caribbean pirates torn from dead victims two hundred years ago. Ariadne drew a deep breath. "Oh!" she said, and looked at me.

But there was more to be done. I wanted to discover exactly how far the cache extended, and so I proceeded a little further, still keeping seven feet from the ring, and resumed operations. The stake came down upon the top of something hard, as before, within three feet from the surface, and when, after a great deal more labour, I had cleared the earth from the second chest, and opened it, a similar sight met my eye. Further exploration revealed a third chest; but now I did not trouble to open this, for I began to understand the

system. The chests had been buried in a central ring within the outer ring of the palms, and at a rough guess I estimated the number at seven. But what was the value of the contents of these seven chests? I could but vaguely wonder in my mind, and more vaguely conjecture. From the glance I had of the first its contents might be worth anything up to £100,000! If so—my imagination staggered under the calculation. And then to that succeeded the thought, was even that vast sum worth the sacrifice of life it had entailed, the terrible passions it had let loose? But it was no time to moralise. We had found that for which we had set out, at an infinite cost of pains and bloodshed; and it was my duty to let Halliday know. We must make our way to the cove with as much expedition as possible. I began to cover up the exposed chests, as I explained to Ariadne our immediate course, but when I came to the chest which we had first opened I paused. An idea flashed into me. I had been the discoverer of what Halliday had given up as hopelessly lost—I and Ariadne. Well, I would just take toll of one little thing, an atom among many. Among the dull gold of the guineas and doubloons and louis d'or, lying as on a bed, was a single shining opal ring—large and brilliant as a rainbow. I took it, and seizing her hand gently, slipped it on the third finger. "My present, sweet," I said.

She looked at me with dewy eyes, but said nothing, only held me fast, and then, with a gulp of tears, broke out:

"I hope I shall be happier than the poor soul who once wore this!"

"Happy!" I echoed. "Yes; it will bring compensation. It has outlasted ill-luck. It will bring you happiness."

And I kissed her there above the hoard of treasure, under the shadow of the six palms.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE REFUGE IN THE COVE

WE were now bound for the cove, but before setting out we must make shift to take a meal. We had been at work for some hours, and the sun stood at noon. I was not alarmed, however, by this fact, as I was aware that our comrades would not leave the island without us. If they were picked up by the strange steamer they would see that she returned to rescue us. So we ate heartily of our tinned food, and drank from a little sparkling tarn which we discovered in the hillside. After that, feeling refreshed and rested, we made a start.

We kept along the northern slopes at a uniform level for some time, until we reached the divide where the ridge broke up into separate fragments, and went down to the eastern sea like the spread fingers of a hand. On this summit, before our descent into the most southerly of these coves or bays, we got a wide prospect of the sea southward. To my surprise and chagrin I saw upon the horizon a low, small dot as of a vessel disappearing into the amplitude of the ocean. It was manifest, then, that our party had failed to attract the steamer's attention, and my heart sank. And then I had my second surprise; for casting my glance down to the cove below, and the bluff off which the *Duncannon*

had swung at anchor, I found her gone. My eyes swept an empty sea. I stared, wondering what this might portend, when again, away on the horizon, I made out a second blotch. The tramp had deserted the island!

For some moments I stood there revolving in my mind the possibilities of the situation. Could Marley and the others have regained possession of the *Duncannon* from the mutineers who remained, never, I guessed, so unscrupulous and tough a lot as their partners ashore? But if so, they would certainly not have left us behind. Had they been overpowered by the gang under Clifford and Davenant? But Clifford and Davenant were without a boat. Who was the single adventurer in their boat whom we had descried? Puzzles faced me in every direction. At the worst, we might be alone on the island with the vile pack of mutineers. At the best, the mutineers might have escaped and left our party marooned. But was that best? I had another alternative, at which my heart stirred. Were Ariadne and I alone on the island? And should we have to take up life there under the conditions of Robinson Crusoe or a Swiss Family, until we were rescued by a passing ship? It was, of course, foolish of me to have contemplated this solution, yet I did so, with a certain pleasure. I even went the length of hurriedly calculating the chances of stocking a larder under the threatened conditions.

"Ariadne," I asked her, "would you much mind if we had to play at Robinson Crusoe here?"

"No," she said softly after a long pause; "not with you."

"Well, sweet, it may be thrust upon us. But nothing is certain. The only thing certain is that nothing is certain. We must go down to the cove, and then we shall know more.

We descended slowly, for there was no need for haste now, and I had much to turn over in my thoughts. The bush was rough and luxuriant, and at times the hill was steep, and I had to hand Ariadne down from tree-trunk to tree-trunk. But at last we got upon the flat ground at the base, which was closely wooded, and thus shut off our view of the water. We advanced with great caution, and, putting up a warning hand to my companion, I went some dozen paces ahead of her. I came to a pause behind a bush, and levelled my revolver in readiness, for a sound, as of a man creeping, caught my ear. Then everything was still, and only the noisy water on the beach was audible.

Then I was aware of a muzzle pointing towards me through the bush behind which I sheltered, and of a hand that held it. I did not know whether I was visible from the other side, but I did not move, and for some minutes we stood there, each with his lifted weapon on either side of the bush. Then a branch cracked under me, and the hand on the other side, as if moved in excitement or alarm, emerged more clearly through the twigs.

"Marley!" I called; I recognised the hairy, swarthy skin.

"That you, old man?" he cried. "Great Scott! I nearly put a hole in your gizzard." He came out of hiding. "It was a near thing," he went on in his friendly manner. "I couldn't be quite sure it was a branch or a human arm I saw, and I thought of letting drive on the off-chance."

"Glad you didn't," I replied. "I saw you, but simply didn't shoot, because I didn't know who you were. You might have been a mutineer."

"No; the blighters are over there." He nodded towards the bluff. We hadn't any luck—couldn't get those beggars to see our signals, though I waved every blessed rag I had on my back on the top of the oars. So we came along here. I say, where's Miss Sylvester?"

"She's safe," I said, and called: "Miss Sylvester!"

Ariadne drew out of the bushes, alert and sweet and smiling. "Oh, I'm so glad you're better, Mr. Marley," she said.

"I'm as fit as a fiddle," he said. "I'm equal to another scrap too. It was like my luck to be out of the fun last time."

He was quite an amazing person, was Marley, with his good nature, familiarity, bad language, and general indifference to moral precepts. We went back with him to the encampment, hearing his story as we walked.

"We waited for you, old chap, till the last; and then we had to do a bolt. Those panthers came down in a rage royal and scared us off. Why, there wasn't any treasure, it seems. And they kicked up a devil

of a row. I tell you, from the ugly looks of those Dagoes, Clifford and Co. must have a nice shop to shut up. They'd seen their boat stolen from under their noses. Oh, I say, Miss Sylvester, it was your uncle. Great Scott, the old man had 'em nicely on toast, regularly gave them the pip. I chuckled. He cleared out with their blooming boat, my boy—hooked it and went aboard the *Duncannon*." He paused, looking seaward meditatively. "Though where the blazes she's gone and what he's up to fairly beats me."

"He's gone to get help," declared Ariadne positively. "I know he has."

"But how did he manage all those beggars on board?" he asked doubtfully.

"Oh, he bribed them once; he'd bribe them again," said Ariadne confidently.

"Well, if that's the case," said Marley cheerfully, "we ain't in so bad a fix as I thought. But crickey, old man, it was up against us," he added.

We were cordially welcomed by McLeod, and by Halliday, who had recovered from his blow. McLeod was effusive in his attitude to Ariadne, and somehow, for a moment, I experienced a return of my old feeling against him. But it was an ungenerous impulse, and I fought it off. It was curious and even pathetic to observe the change in Halliday. He had come back to consciousness, and he was cheerfully courteous, and even ceremonious, but he had lost all his elasticity. He was a beaten man, and he showed his consciousness of this in a tender resignation. He was very thoughtful

of others, and kept Ariadne's hand in his for some minutes while he shook it, welcoming her back to safety.

"I had just given you up, my dear," he said in his strange, young-old fatherly manner. "But I'm right glad to see you back. Herapath's a good man at need, and I reckon he's pulled you through. We're going to hear all about it as soon as you've had some food and rest. Come right along."

"Mr. Herapath's good at need," said Ariadne, flashing at me brightly, "and he's got something to tell you."

"That's right. We'll be much interested in your adventures," said Halliday pleasantly, patting her hand. "Come away in. We've got some desiccated soup, and I guess it's as good as gold. Collins here is a right down fine cook."

We sat down under the tree which sheltered the party from the hot sun, and the first thing I did was to ask for a pipe.

"Right, old man," said Marley. "'Like as the hart desireth the water brooks,' hey?" He pulled out a plug of tobacco. "Lucky we put some in the cache. We've got about enough provisions to last us two days. Reckon that uncle of yours will have to come along quick, Miss Sylvester."

"What's that?" asked Halliday, and was informed of our conjecture.

He listened thoughtfully, and then said wistfully: "Say, wouldn't it have been fine if we were putting aboard the treasure then? But I guess little Willie's

gone and put his coat on a dead 'un this time. If he can shove off with his carcass he'll not squeal."

"But—but——" broke in Ariadne, all radiance, "it isn't—oh, Mr. Herapath will tell you. Tell, oh, tell."

"I think," said I deliberately, crossing my legs, smiling at her sweet face, and puffing at my pipe—"I think that this is Miss Sylvester's story. I will go so far. The Clifford gang took her, and they also took me, as you know; and when I got back to her my narrative ends. Hers begins, for the discovery was hers."

"No, no!" she cried. "It wasn't. It was yours. I only—well——" She was so excited that she turned off again in her course. "They seized me—because I heard them talking—in order to secure Mr. Herapath; they wanted to weaken the garrison, and they chained him up with ropes and things, and he was there all night."

"Let us come to the discovery, please," I urged.

"Oh yes; and—well, I won't talk about that, because it was hateful. But when he went away he gave me a knife out of his pocket—and something fell out on the ground, and I picked it up when he was gone, and it was a snuff-box. I mean Mr. Herapath found it was when he came back. And so I showed it to him, and we opened it, and there was a paper in it."

"Wait," said Halliday, who was listening with open eyes. "I don't just understand what this snuff-box is."

"I picked it up in the cave on the Devil's Pulpit," I said.

"Go on!" he said tensely.

"And then," panted Ariadne, resuming her wild incoherent narrative, "Mr. Herapath made it out, and it said about six palms, and seven feet, and N.N.W., and how it was for Jake, and——"

"Great Scott, what's this!" cried Marley.

She turned to him. "Oh, Mr. Marley, if you'd only seen them, the chests full of gold, and——"

"Let us get the hang of this, please," said Halliday, interrupting; and his fingers were trembling. "What about this paper?"

For answer I took the snuff-box from my pocket and gave it to him. I'deciphered the letters for him, and was giving my interpretation, when Ariadne broke in impetuously.

"Oh, see—see! Think of my nearly forgetting!" She thrust her pretty hand under his nose. "This ring was there. It came from there. There were heaps more—thousands! Oh, it was wonderful."

"We're getting along now," said Halliday, with marvellous restraint, his eyes gloating over the ring. "Guess you ran the hoard to earth then, Herapath! That's your news?"

"That's about the size of it," I answered.

The faces of the group, which included Collins, were turned aglow upon me.

"By Jupiter, it's a fairy tale!" exclaimed Marley.

Now that I had reached my climax I set out to ex-

plain in detail, and we gave the gaping auditors a history of our adventures. At the close Halliday moistened his lips.

"Say, Marley, you got a pencil any way?" he said feverishly. "Doctor, I'd be obliged if you'd bring out one of those bottles yonder and draw a cork. I guess we're going to have a drink on this. And I'll trouble someone for a piece of paper. I'm going to figure out things."

McLeod brought from the cache one of the few bottles of champagne which had accidentally come ashore with us, and soon the cork popped, while Halliday's nose was over his notes.

"Here you are, man," said McLeod, handing him the gourd in which the yellow wine was bubbling. Halliday looked up, and saw smiling faces. His wore a serious look.

He sipped the wine meditatively. "Here's to the treasure, boys!" he said, and bowed very formally in Ariadne's direction.

Yes, there was *that* treasure too. She met my eyes tenderly, and drank a little of her wine.

"Here's to your success, Mr. Halliday. Your pluck has carried you through."

"Now, I was going to say," remarked the American slowly, "that it wasn't precisely my pluck. Anyway, I'm glad I'm through, and I offer you another toast, gentlemen. To the discoverers!"

They drank this with good-fellowship, looking towards Ariadne and myself.

"It's lucky," observed Halliday, sipping his champagne, "that I didn't take up this wine scheme. I guess it would have got hold of me, and I'd have been a drunkard."

The idea seemed so preposterous that I could hardly keep from laughter.

"Not you, old man," growled Marley; "you've got plenty of backbone."

"I'm not exactly saying I haven't," he answered complacently. "I generally work through if I start. Now take this gold business. I reckon there's few who would have started out on the proposition, as I had it. Herapath here laughed at me. Well, the laugh's on him now."

I laughed at him again, in contemplation of the change in him. He was transmogrified beyond all belief; in a way, he was transfigured by his triumph, and his fair hair shone in the sunshine like an aureole about an ethereal face. He dazzled with the urbane sovereignty of his self-satisfaction.

"We aren't out of the wood yet," I reminded him.

It might have been cruelty, if it had had any effect; but Halliday, in his recovered self-possession, was proof against all doubts and difficulties once again.

"I guess we'll wait for the *Duncannon* and Mr. Carvaulx," he said. "We can get along all right till then. Well, now, see here. I've just been figuring out things and putting 'em down roughly. We've got to make out a new scheme." He looked round. "There's eight of us in this now, and Digby there aboard. I'm going

to tear up those agreements all round and start fresh. And seems to me the best I can do is to put it into a joint-stock company shape. We reckon nine of us; Digby, I guess, must put up with what he was going to get, coming in at the eleventh hour, so to speak. The capital of this concern, gentlemen, is one thousand dollars—two hundred pounds; and Digby's going to have eighty-five dollar shares in it. Carter there, and Collins, and the other are coming in a bit too, for this is mutual concern. Well, I've had some difficulty in fixing up the shares of Marley and McLeod and myself. Anyway, I've figured out something." He consulted his notes. "Then there's Miss Sylvester and Herapath. They're mighty awkward. We got to take Digby as our basis, and climb up from him. I'll get it fixed up this evening right enough."

"This is what I call premature," observed McLeod somewhat testily.

Halliday observed him gravely. "Doctor," he said, wagging a finger, "you take my word for it, there's nothing premature, save premature death, and that don't count, because it wipes out. And if a man's got a bit of time squeezed out anywheres, he's going to fit something into that crack, or lose an opportunity later on. If we can square things now, we won't be wasting our time and tempers later. For as for me, I'm blamed if I'm being occupied much just now."

That was true enough. We had the time on our hands, and our only occupation was waiting. Our camp was fortified by its store of provisions for a day

or two, so that it would not be necessary to forage till then, and maybe events would make it unnecessary to forage at all. Yet it was hard to sit down and idle, always with the anxiety of the mutineering party at the back of our minds. So far they had not shown any signs of troubling the camp, but it was always possible that they might make up their minds to descend upon the cove at any moment, out of mere wanton desire of vengeance, or to obtain possession of the boat. It was that latter thought that hung in my mind all the afternoon. I left Ariadne to her much-needed rest, and made an inspection of the neighbourhood. Halliday was puzzling out his proportions, and Marley was in charge of the camp. McLeod and I made the tour together, and discussed the chances of a surprise attack.

"They won't dare," he said. "They've nothing to gain by it now. There's no treasure, so far as they know."

"There's the boat," I urged; "and if the *Duncannon* is returning with help, as we hope, there is the necessity of their getting away before she does. That's vital to them. To my mind, it's more vital than treasure."

"They can't have any hope of that," he said.

"Well, it's a risk, but they've got to take it," I replied. "If they had a boat they could make a bolt of it, and trust to chance. There are other islands not far off; and Crashaw, at any rate, is a good sailor."

He did not seem convinced, but directed the talk to a topic that was even more important for us.

"How if she doesn't return?" he said moodily.

"We're done," I said shortly. "We're at the mercy of chance—a passing steamer. I daresay we can manage to subsist, but it will be little more; and, by heaven, all the treasure in the world won't make any difference to us then."

"That's what puts me out with that fanatic yonder," said McLeod, jerking his elbow. "Now the treasure's found he's in heaven, when he ought to be in hell."

"No," I demurred. "Purgatory."

He paid no heed; we had got to the eastern slope of the cove, where the trees overhung the deep blue water that swept in a little tide of foam against the sandy shore.

"There's fish," he said, pointing into the clear depths.

"Oh, we shan't starve," I agreed.

On the top of the bluff across the little bay something caught my eye. It moved, and I put it down as a man. I indicated it to McLeod.

"Yes," he said. "Prospecting. But there's nothing for them here. I shouldn't wonder if the bluff alone separated us. Purgatory? Well, maybe you're right; but it spells hell in the end."

We turned and went back, for the dusk was falling, and we had certain precautions to take before dark. The camp had awakened into life when we got back. Halliday had finished his calculations, which, he declared, would be acceptable to us, and which he would set before us in the morning. But I do not think any one of us cared two straws about them while our fate

hung in the balance. The initial excitement of the discovery had worn off, and was succeeded by apathy. We settled into silence and the night in a dismal mood.

In spite of my recent trials and exertions I could not get any consecutive sleep of account; and I at last got up, and joined the sentry, who was Carter. After some conversation with him I left the camp, and strolled down towards the beach.

The night was lifting, and the water was spectral-grey under the whip of a stiff wind. It rolled in with a continuous drone upon the shells and sand of the cove. I made my way round towards the outstanding bluff, and climbed the heights out of mere restlessness rather than with any design. But once on the top I cast my eyes westward for any evidence of the enemy's presence. Nothing was visible inland, but an eye of light twinkled on the beach through the trees, a mile away, and I conjectured this to mark the camp. The wind was cool, and I had lost the heat engendered by my ascent and so turned to go down. On one side of the bluff I seemed to make out a shadow that moved upon the water. I hurried down the hill, and came out upon the margin of the bay. The shadow was still there, and still moved. And then, with a thrill of fury and fear, I realised the situation. Someone was making off with our boat.

The boat was some two hundred yards from shore, standing off in the rough water, and if anything was to be done I must act at once. Without hesitating I plunged into the sea, and struck out towards it. I swam quietly for some time, dipping in the heavy seas,

and wondering when I should emerge into the field of vision. It was almost certain that the runaway had not distinguished me in the black shadows of the shore, but if he kept a good watch, as he must surely do, he must eventually spy me, a dark blotch upon the face of the bay. I had time to wonder what would happen. In a little I knew.

For I was only some thirty paces from the boat when the occupant rose, oars in hand, and peered out in his wake silently. Then he set to harder than before. Evidently he was trying to run away from me. I increased my stroke, but I could not gain on him. He had me beaten. Despair seized me. And then suddenly he stopped rowing, and waited on his oars. I approached until I was no more than twelve yards away, in the black trough of the water, and his figure was outlined in the twilight. Then he laughed shortly; and I knew him. He never moved from his seat, but just shipped his oars, and leaned to the side.

"I've wanted you badly, my cock," he said; "you're too good for this life. And so you're off to heaven."

He chuckled at his joke, and as I mounted the roller a flash was in my eye. I heard nothing, for I dived at that moment. Indeed, I think I must have gone under before he pulled the trigger, and my fancy had supplied the flash. I held my breath as long as I could, and then came up. The boat was three yards away, Clifford, revolver in hand, was peering into the broken water, and his back was to me. I had gone under the boat. In two strokes I had my hand on the rudder, and next

moment I was aboard. He jumped round as I rose to my feet, but his shot went wide. Then I took hold of him.

"I think Heaven wants you," I said, "but that's not where he's waiting."

And I threw him out into the sea, into which he sank with a mighty splash. Then I sat down, and began to pull into the cove again. Clifford did not rise, as far as I could see; but I confess I did not bestow much consideration upon him. I rowed for the shore as hard as I could.

CHAPTER XIX

THE FRENCHMAN

THIS attempt, so nearly successful, frightened our party. They had relaxed discipline and grown slack in the demoralisation of the flight, and Marley expressed penitence in his usual frank way.

"I'm damn well ashamed of myself, old chap," he said. "I didn't think of the beggars making for the boat. I thought they might attack, but that was all. We ought to have put a guard on the boat."

"They don't want to fight if they can help it," I said. "This was a much easier way. I don't know where the brains are, but I begin to suspect Clifford. He's more than a little drunken jocular ruffian."

"It's either him or Davenant, curse him," agreed Marley.

This conversation took place in the early dawn, when, having turned into some spare garments, I was drying my wet clothes by the fire and sipping a little whisky and water.

"I don't know but what we'd better let 'em have the boat," mused Marley gloomily. "I'd rather have their room than their company, any day. Let 'em clear out, and then we'd be quite a comfortable party on a desert island. Shouldn't mind a week or two of it. There's

fish, and we could keep ourselves going on the birds. What the blazes is that?"

He pointed to sea, on which a drift of smoke was visible.

"It's a steamer!" I exclaimed.

"Done with you; and the old tramp, I'll lay. Bully for Frenchy."

We rose in our excitement, and stared. It was, undoubtedly, a steamer, and it did not take us very long to make out that she was approaching the island. Half-an-hour later she was distinct upon the horizon; and the camp, awake and alert now, was full of talk and speculation and cheerfulness.

"I knew uncle had gone for help," declared Ariadne as soon as we had decided that the steamer was the *Duncannon*.

"How the deuce did he get it so soon?" wondered Marley. "We're a sight of a way off the nearest port."

But the problem would solve itself in due course, and we waited with impatience, but with joy, for the solution. It was seven o'clock in the morning when the *Duncannon* cast anchor a mile in the offing; and immediately upon that a boat put off from her side. We hung on the progress of that boat in a way which you can conceive; and when it vanished behind the bluff our whole party raced up the hill—all, that is, save Carter, who was left in charge with the wounded stoker. When we had reached the summit we could look down upon the long line of beach that curved towards the creek,

and we saw the boat inshore, and several of the mutineers watching it. They were, no doubt, of the opinion that their own party were still in possession of the ship. We could see them hail the boat.

"Shout!" I cried; and my companions and I gave them a lead. We all shouted, and the stream of our united voices rose on the wind. I also fired a revolver, and for some moments we made a determined demonstration. The boat paused; and then after a momentary hesitation swerved and came along towards the bluff. A yell from the shore greeted this manœuvre, and the mutineers started to run towards us, keeping parallel with the boat. It was evident that they had discovered their mistake. And now began a race upon which depended the fortunes of both parties. The mutineers ran to cut off the boat before it should reach the cove, and we ran precipitately down the bluff to encourage the rowers.

It soon became evident that the boat would outpace the men on the shore, who had a clear path to the bluff, but would not be able to surmount that rough ascent before the boat could slip round the point. Seeing this, I suggested to Marley that we should descend on the cove side, and this diversion we immediately made. Ariadne had insisted on accompanying us, and she sped like Atalanta, reckless of stones and shrubs, breathless, but full of life and colour. And thus we got down to the sea just as the boat turned the point and put up her rudder to enter. I shouted, and a man in the stern waved his hand. Ten minutes later, when the fore-

most of the mutineers was mounting the crest of the bluff, the boat beached near us. A young fair man of some five or six and twenty rose from the stern.

"Captain Wade?" he called out.

"Dead!" called back Marley. "I'm in charge."

The young man climbed ashore. "This is a damned bad business," he said, and then seeing a lady, raised his cap. "Beg pardon," he said, "but they've pitched me a tall yarn. Those your hands?"

He nodded towards the bluff. "Mutinied," said Marley.

"I made a mistake—nearly fell up against them," said the young man.

"Who are you?" asked McLeod. "Where do you spring from? Glad to see you, anyway."

"Why, damn it, there's Harris," said Marley, pointing to a man at the oars.

Harris, with a weak grin, touched his cap.

"I'm R. M. S. *Trinidad*, fourth officer Ellicombe," explained the young man. "Had an accident to our steering gear yesterday, and got a bit out of our way. Lucky for you we did."

"By Jove," said McLeod. "You're right. We were in a tight corner."

"Did my uncle find you?" inquired Ariadne.

Ellicombe looked puzzled.

"Frenchman," said Marley explanatorily.

"Oh, him! Well, he's aboard safe. Lucky for him too. Your blessed tub would have foundered if we hadn't hit on it. Every blessed man tight as blazes," he

explained, with a grin, "and the little old—your uncle, miss—in a blue funk."

"What the deuce——" began Marley; but I interrupted.

"Look here, if I'm not mistaken there'll be trouble with those scoundrels on the hill. It's their last chance. Don't be taken at a quiet tea-party."

Marley looked up. "We'd best be moving," he said.

"There's room aboard. Come along. We'll fetch the ship in no time," said the young officer cheerfully.

"I guess we've got to get back and pick up a friend or two," said Halliday, who was out of breath with his unwonted physical exertions, and had hitherto been listening. "This is my show, Mr. Ellicombe."

The young officer hesitated. "Seems a tough lot," he remarked. "Made a set at us as soon as we began backing out. It hadn't been for Harris, as you call him, we'd have been in among them. He gave us the tip. Then we heard your signals."

It was a comfort to know that one at least of the mutineers had returned to his loyalty; but there was much yet to learn. We entered the boat, as the mutineers showed on the hill, and the strong arms of the rowers pulled her towards the top of the cove, where Carter and the stoker were anxiously awaiting us.

We had time for some further explanations on the way. What was puzzling me was the Frenchman. The mail boat had picked up a drunken tramp, staggering in the wilds of a dirty sea, and had taken her in charge like a decent constable.

"Sent me aboard with half-a-dozen men," explained Ellicombe. "She was walking round her own head, as if she wanted to see her own phiz," laughed the young man. "No one at the wheel, and the little Frenchman scared out of his life! A warm lot! I've got 'em sobered down a bit by now, but they're not worth much. They're cheap enough still."

"And you heard of the mutiny?" I burst out.

"Yes. Your man, Digby, told me. Found him in irons. Great Scott! A warm lot! It was he told me about you, and that brought me off in the boat."

"Digby!" I cried. It was not the Frenchman, then. Poor, grumbling, forgotten Digby had been the means of our deliverance.

"I guess Digby's got to have his share raised a bit," remarked Halliday thoughtfully.

"And my uncle?" broke in Ariadne.

"Your uncle, miss——" said Ellicombe vaguely, and remembered. "Oh, the Frenchman! I haven't seen him since. He got scared, and I believe he's in his cabin recovering. My, it was pretty warm," he repeated again.

There it was again. The Frenchman puzzled me.

"Where the dickens was the old hooker bound for?" demanded Marley.

"There you get me," replied the young man. "Rolling like a porpoise on a holiday. I don't believe she was going anywhere."

"Why, there's Harris," I called suddenly. "Harris can say. Hi, Harris, what's all this? Come back to your senses, eh?"

"I ought to give the joker what he's asked for," observed Marley reminiscently.

"Don't frighten him," I answered back. "We can't afford it. Pass it over. It's not as if he was one of the murdering crowd ashore."

Harris by this had cleared his throat nervously.

"Yes, sir," he answered. "They made fools of us."

"Just about the edges," I assented. "And what course were you laying?"

"Nicaragua, sir," said Harris after a pause.

"Nicaragua!" we all exclaimed in amazement.

"What the devil——" Marley opened his mouth. "Who the mischief was going to Nicaragua?" he asked.

"Steady!" said I, laying my hand on his arm. "Look yonder!"

The water was broken from the wind of the night, and the boat rocked in the swell. We were within fifty yards of the head of the cove, and less than fifty yards of the shores on each side. A figure in the new sunlight had caught my eye. Soon it disappeared in the bushes.

"What is it?" asked McLeod.

"Put her over the other side," I said to Ellicombe, who was steering at the land.

"A warm lot!" he murmured under his breath. "Golly, what a warm lot!"

The boat swung out towards the farther wall of the cove, and the rowers increased the pace.

"No; look here, old man, this won't do," said Marley.

"If we hang off here they'll be down on Carter and the boat. They can't all have come up yet. We've got to fight 'em. Put her round, old chap."

Ellicombe hesitated. He was young to have this sudden responsibility. "Oh, hell!" he said, and obeyed. We were now not more than thirty paces away from the shore.

"Aback there!" called a resonant voice from the bushes. "I've got a bead on you, and I'll fire."

"Cut along, lads," urged Marley, as the crew hesitated; "we're not afraid of ghosts."

"Herapath," called the voice, "I've got the girl fixed, and I'll shoot if you don't stop."

"Stop for God's sake!" I cried.

"No, no; go on," cried Ariadne, pale as death. The oars ceased, and there was silence for some time. McLeod had risen in the boat and was staring defiantly towards the land.

"By gum, I could pick you off, doc," said a new voice, which I recognised as Clifford's, panting but jocose. "Talk about a haystack! I haven't had a shot at a rabbit for a month of Sundays."

"Sit down!" I said to McLeod.

His face was full of a fury, and his red hair caught the rays of the risen sun. He fingered his revolver fretfully.

"Damn it, this isn't a music hall," cried a voice from the shore. "Let her go."

Crack! McLeod put out a hand as though to save

himself from falling, and then fell sideways among the rowers. Ariadne uttered a cry.

"Oh, hell!" said the young officer.

I lifted up McLeod, but saw at a glance that he was gone.

"Now, by the God that made me——" I began in a frenzy.

"Don't, old man, don't," said Marley soothingly.

"They've got us in a cleft stick."

"Herapath, I've got the filly covered." This was Clifford's voice again. "Put about and go out. I'll give you ten seconds," he shouted.

"They want that boat of ours," breathed Marley hoarsely. "It's a rule of terror."

"Let's get out," said Ellicombe uneasily. "They're too tough."

I seized Ariadne swiftly, and jerked her on to the boards of the boat. "Down, anyone who likes," I said. "I'm not going like this."

Collins cast a glance at me. "I'll go with you, sir," he said.

"Down all!" I called; and a flash came with my words. I was in the sea as I spoke, and I knew not what happened behind me; for I was under water for several yards, and I rose on the farther side from the boat. Casting a glance back I saw it rocking on the water, and apparently empty. I struck out strongly for the shore, and was soon out of range.

Landing in the undergrowth, I quickly made my way into the thickets, and there cast about for a weapon of

some sort. I found a heavy branch, which I trimmed with my knife into the semblance of a pole, and, armed with this, I forced my way through the scrub, towards our camp. As I drew near I heard a shot, and I guessed that Clifford had, while holding the boat, diverted some of his force against Carter on shore. I tumbled along as fast as I could, and reached the spot just in time. The stoker lay stretched out upon the ground, and Carter from behind him was deliberately, and without haste, loading his gun. He raised it and fired as I came up. I swerved aside on a new thought, and made a rapid detour among the bushes. Then, raising my pole, I crashed down through the undergrowth. There was a cry of alarm, a shot which went vainly past, and then a man broke away. I hurled the heavy pole, and it took him in the small of the back. He fell without so much as a sound, spread-eagled. The sound of feet in flight came out of the bushes.

I walked over to the man. It was Crashaw, and Crashaw, I believe, had fired the fatal shot at McLeod. I left his body as it lay, and went to Carter.

"I dunno if I hit anything, sir," he remarked. "But I had a try. Poor Tom's done for."

"Give me one of the guns," I said, "and we'll march. They will renew the attack if we don't. We must take the boat."

We made our way cautiously to the water's edge, where the boat was concealed, and launching her pushed off. "Now—now, as if the devil was after you, as he is, Carter," I said.

The other boat had receded some fifty yards, and lay waiting events. But we were no sooner started than a yell informed us that we were discovered. I was sculling as fast as I could, and Carter's powerful arms aided mine. There was nothing to be done but to take the risk. Several shots were fired at us, and one struck one of my oars, but we pulled ahead without reply, and at last I breathed with relief. We were practically out of range of their revolvers, and the *Duncannon's* other boat stood after us.

"All right?" I hailed as we drew together.

"Yes, old boy. Bully for you!" said Marley raucously.

The choppy water joggled us together. I felt Ariadne's hand clasped on mine as I rested a moment.

"I thought you were killed when I heard those shots," she said.

And now Ellicombe transferred two of his men to my boat, and we proceeded to pull out to the *Duncannon*. At last we were safe, and on the empty beach the mutineers were left to their own despair.

The first man we met aboard was Digby, greyer in face but dignified in manner, who welcomed us after his fashion.

"Glad to see there's some honest men left. I've got these chaps tamed. Stewart, haul away there."

"He blew his whistle, and the remnant of the crew responded with alacrity, as if anxious to demonstrate their fidelity.

"Had a rough time?" I asked; and he grunted.

"Great Scott, I'd sooner have been in irons all the time than have had our time," ejaculated Marley.

"What's your luck?" asked Digby.

Marley let his gaze go over the company, now all on board. "There's the answer, old man," he said. "We've come down to that."

Digby stared. "Wade——" he said, and seemed to calculate. "McLeod—by God!"

"That's a real proper comment," said Marley, with a grin. "We've been riddled, old boy, and would have been wiped out if it weren't for these jokers."

Digby stiffened sensibly with pride. "I had some trouble in persuading him who I was; but the ship's articles did it. I told him of the meeting. Though what the blazes we were after when they caught us up is more than I know."

"I think we can get at that," I said. "Where's Carvaulx?"

"Shut himself in his cabin," said Digby. "Can't get the beggar to answer."

"Dotty?" suggested Marley.

"Look here," said Ellicombe's voice, "what's the matter with breakfast?"

It was a good idea. We adjourned to the saloon, and while we ate we talked.

"The men aboard are all right. Quartermaster's in irons," said Digby, "and the rest are like mice. Got heads, I suppose."

"I want to know why the tub was set for Nicaragua," said Marley.

"Harris!" I said. "He's our man."

"Harris was decent to me all along," observed Digby.

The problem obtruded itself, and after we had fed more substantially than we had for some days Harris was brought aft.

"You were interrupted in the middle of an answer, my man," said I. "We want to get at the root of this mystery."

"Speak up," said Marley.

Harris hesitated. "What I'd like you to know, sir," he said at last, "is how I stand."

We looked at each other. "Well, this is a hanging business," growled Marley. "But we've got to get off it as easily as we may. Spit it out, and I'll go bail we'll let you down lightly."

Harris glanced at our faces. "I was agin it from the first, sir," he said. "But they Dagoes had the upper hand, and Mr. Clifford was thick with them. And what's more, they left all of us that was respectable behind."

"Respectable!" growled Marley.

"Anyway, sir, there was me and seven more didn't want it, but they forced us in. And the quartermaster Edwards, he was left to look after us. But even he was mild on it."

"Oh, get along," said Marley. "We'll call it square."

Halliday was staring feverishly out of grey-blue eyes.

"Why did the *Duncannon* make for Nicaragua?" I asked quietly.

"Because the Frenchy wanted it," he blurted out.

"May I be cauterised!" said Marley. "What the hell's all this?"

"He gave us ten pound apiece to do it, sir," went on Harris quickly. "Said as how you had got Mr. Clifford and Crashaw in a tight corner, and that we would all go into the dock unless we were careful. Then says he, he wanted to go to Nicaragua for help, and that we would be pardoned if we did. And he produces ten ten-pound notes, and planks 'em down, and says he will give double that on reaching Nicaragua. The quartermaster—he was flustered-like, and he made up his mind to get up steam."

"Phew!" Marley whistled.

"Hot potatoes!" remarked young Ellicombe.

"But why Nicaragua?" I asked, puzzled.

Harris had no answer to this, but seemed to wish to impress upon us the fact that his comrades and himself had definitely thrown in their lot with us.

"Let's go and look up the old man," suggested Marley. "He'll be able to shed some light on this."

But that, it turned out, was impracticable. Ariadne had gone to her cabin, and from thence had sought her uncle. She came out of his cabin, in answer to our knocking, with an anxious face.

"Uncle is ill," she explained. "He begs not to be disturbed just now."

"Rattled!" was Marley's comment. "All right, we'll postpone it, though I'd dearly like to know some more."

We had now a melancholy duty, which was to commit McLeod's body to the sea; and it was a solemn office. The late mutineers came to heel in an orderly manner, and, I think, were gravely impressed by the service. The sequels of the mutiny were brought home to them thus for the first time, and they were very silent. When the shotted body had cloven the water with a splash, Marley turned to them where they mustered.

"That's the last of the murdered men," he said. "Think yourselves lucky that you had no direct part in the bloody business, and that we've agreed to overlook your doings."

They dispersed quietly, and we went about our duties in a subdued mood. It had been decided that we should pick up the treasure early on the following morning, and then stand off for Jamaica, where we might lay information, and leave the arrest of the mutineers ashore to the authorities. The Frenchman still kept his cabin, and we were refused admittance. And so evening drifted upon us. Ashore the fires of the mutineers' camp were plainly discernible. Ariadne, exhausted from the strain of the last days, sought her cabin early; and it happened that Halliday, Marley, Ellicombe, Digby, and myself sat up in the saloon talking of the future and recalling the past.

The saloon was lighted by a dim lamp, and we sat about the table, and smoked in a better security than we had experienced since the beginning of that tragic cruise.

"And now," said Halliday presently, "I guess we've

done business, and we'll get all squared, and you sha'n't be out of pocket by this, Mr. Ellicombe. Let's talk of something for a holiday. What's the news of the world? And is there anything about the New York election?"

"I don't know that there is," said the young man, who plainly took no interest in such politics. "We made a pretty smart passage till our gear broke down. Russia's much about the same."

"How's Rio Unions?" asked Marley with interest.

Ellicombe's blank gaze manifested complete ignorance of those interesting shares and all others.

"There was a big fire out Limehouse way," he remarked. "Half-a-million, they say. And—oh yes, of course, there's the *affaire Carvaulx*."

I sat up. "What did you say?" I asked, a sound that was familiar ringing in my ears.

"Why, the Carvaulx affair in Paris," he explained. "The banker who bolted."

"Judas!" exclaimed Marley.

We eyed each other. Halliday leaned forward. "Is that C-A-R-V-A-U-L-X?" he inquired, with glittering eyes.

"That's it, I think," said the youth. "Made off with £100,000, they say. There were branches at Lyons and Marseilles and other places, and the whole caboodle burst. Thought you would have heard of it before you started. He was quite a figure in Paris, and no one knows where he's got to. He was supposed to have gone to England, but the last idea was that he had fled to the Argentine."

"Gad, we've got the josser on board!" cried Marley, bringing down his fist on the table.

As the rattle died away I heard something fall to the ground behind me.

"What's that?" I asked, and rose.

Digby rose also. "I'll see," he said, and darted into the cabin in my rear. He came back in a few minutes. "Only a book fallen," he said. "Tumbled off the wash-table. Someone gone on Marie Corelli."

"That's mine, old man," said Marley.

"'Treasure of Heaven'!" read Halliday.

"Guess it's treasure of hell we've got," said Marley.

We laughed shortly, and then stared at each other in silence.

"This is up against us," said Halliday at last. "We've got the identical. What's to be done? There's the girl."

CHAPTER XX

AT THE STAKE

THE situation was astounding, and it was also embarrassing. To us it was even painful, for in Halliday's last words lay the sting, as far as I was concerned. There was Ariadne! In the brief space of time that intervened between Halliday's exclamation and the next voice, my mind hastily surveyed the past in kaleidoscopic pictures. In the light of the revelation by Ellicombe, all that had happened and seemed mysterious took shape and form. I recalled the wizened figure on the pier making nervous interrogations as to the American liner, the fruitless attempt to secure a passage from Wade, the manœuvre of the wrecked craft, which was, of course, not intended to be wrecked as it had been, and the subsequent philosophic indifference of M. Carvaulx to his surroundings. He had fled on the wings of terror, but when he was once out of reach of the law he became another man. I was witness to that. Even the hazards of the mutiny did not affect him, as he reckoned himself merely a spectator in that desperate war. Why, then, had he bribed the crew of the *Duncan* to levant so unexpectedly? Ellicombe broke silence.

"Good Lord, I feel like the Old Bailey," he said, with a laugh. "It's hotter and hotter!"

"Was Carvaulx on deck when you came aboard?" I inquired.

"No," said he. "As I tell you, the ship was floundering about after her tail, and the man at the wheel was half-seas over, and old Harry reigned. It was dark as they make it, too, and I just knocked the buffer at the wheel over and put it in charge of one of my men, and having trimmed things up a bit, and seen to the engines, I went below to see what was up there, and if there were any unfortunate passengers. Then I tumbled up against this old shrimp, who stared at me.

"'Who are you?' says he in small thin voice, as if he'd seen a ghost, but very excited. 'What do you want?'

"'Want?' says I. 'I want to prevent this blooming old hulk from going to the bottom.'

"'You come out of that ship?' he asked, his eyes bulging out at me.

"'Fourth officer on R.M.S. *Trinidad*, at your service,' I said.

"At that he walked off without a word, and took to his cabin, and I've not seen him since."

"It's plain now," I said. "He took fright when he spied you coming up in the offing, and made a bolt for it. He aimed at getting to Nicaragua, and losing his tracks."

"Damned mean old cuss!" declared Marley.

I was silent; I knew that this would be bitter news for his proud niece, whom he would have deserted, this swindling banker with an honoured name.

What then was our duty? Ellicombe refused responsibility.

"I've brought the old tea-pot back," he said. "It's your affair now. I've nothing to do with it."

"I'm not going to take a hand, either," said Marley.

"I guess it isn't our affair," remarked Halliday. "I've undertaken to land the man at Baltimore, and I'll carry out my contract. That's all that's in it to me."

"No," I assented, rising. "We've nothing to do with it, any of us." Nevertheless, I knew I had a good deal to do with it. "One thing," I said, "no word to Miss Sylvester."

There was a pause. "Of course not," replied Halliday. "It's nothing to do with her either."

We broke up to retire with this remarkable discovery to digest, and I accompanied Marley to his cabin. Opposite was the cabin which had once been poor McLeod's, and now, alas! stood empty, its door flung wide, its recesses dark, as if it advertised its emptiness and its gloom.

Marley lit his lamp, and proceeded to throw off his clothes.

"First time, my boy, for what seems years," he observed, yawning in a complacent and tired manner. "Halloa, hang it all——" He had taken his boots off, and was standing peering down. "Some blighter's emptied a pail of water here," he said, "and my feet are wet through."

He looked at the open porthole. "There's been no sea capable of that," I said.

"No; it's some blighter with a pail," he said. "Unless Digby upset the jug. Never mind. I'm dead tired. We can sleep without alarms and excursions to-night. Ta-ta, old chappy!"

As I made off I heard his door close. I too was weary and exhausted, and sleep soon found me.

Ariadne slept well into the morning, and only awoke to my knock. I brought her a cup of tea, and inquired after her uncle.

"He's not at all well, poor thing," she explained, through the door. "He was much upset by those horrible people getting drunk, and stopping him from getting help to us. But it's turned out all right, hasn't it?"

No; I was resolved that it should not be I who informed her of the real facts and of the Frenchman's treachery and crime. We had determined, as you may gather, to say nothing to anyone of our discovery, and to ignore Carvaulx's connections with the *affaire*. But we reckoned without Marley's blunt tongue, as you shall see, and that materially affected the course of our fortunes.

It was Marley himself who made confession, not with any sense of being in the wrong, but rather with a mild sense of injury. Carvaulx made a hesitating appearance at breakfast, apologised for his absence and illness, and made some remarks—regretting his inability to have carried out his project of fetching assistance. I imagine it was some words of his niece's that put him on the track of that explanation. But he had a startled

and a strained air, as if he did not know how far our knowledge went. He was taking a risk, but it had to be taken.

He was treated with civility, and Halliday rose to the occasion with a formal speech of thanks, very ironic to us, but in a most serious key. That saved the situation—for the time. But I have always thought that it was Marley's honest revolt against our studied hypocrisy that fired the train. At any rate, an hour or so later, he came up to me with an unfinished story.

"The old blighter's bolted into his cabin again," he said. "Locked himself in."

"What did you say to him?" I asked suspiciously.

"Oh, nothing much. I asked him what price bank shares or something, quite lightly, and the old fish bolted."

"You've given the show away," I said; but I could say no more, for at that moment a sailor came up to report the loss of a boat. It appeared that one of our boats had not been shipped, but left trailing by a painter in the subsiding sea. This was gone. Marley was affected to anger by the news.

"Damned rogues, breaking out again!" he muttered. "Can't trust 'em. What the devil are they up to now?"

The hands were mustered, but no one was missing. The loss of the boat was a puzzle; also, it was a serious annoyance. We were still engaged in the discussion of its disappearance when the sound of a gun in the distance came to us on the wind. It was followed by sev-

eral successive shots, and drew our eyes shoreward. Marley seized his glasses.

"May I be jolly well burned if it isn't a boat—our boat—and someone working out in it," he cried. The enigma was greater than ever. No one was missing, yet a boat was gone, and there, coming out to the *Duncan-non*, followed by the fire of the mutineers, was a boat rowed by one man. We waited, and exchanged speculations, but no one was near guessing at the wildness of the truth. Within a hundred yards of the steamer, for which he was making directly, we recognised the rower as Byrne—Byrne, the mutineer:

He came aboard to our hail, saying he wanted a private interview, and was at once taken down to the saloon. He looked at us with his false Irish smile and his false *bonhomie*.

"Please remember," said he, "that I've not been in this as much as you think. I've stood aloof. It's been others, as I can prove. And I'm sick of it. I want to give in, if you'll take my terms."

Marley said caustically: "And what terms might these be, my noble hero?"

"I'll give you any information you need; and there's lots you don't know, if you'll rule me out of what's gone by."

"I guess there's lots we don't know," said Haliday thoughtfully; "but I fancy we've got the whip-hand."

"That's why I'm here," said the double traitor cheerfully. "We're beat, and I want to make terms. I

am in a position to give you something worth your while."

"What is that?" I asked.

Byrne grinned, and winked an eye. "Where did that boat come from?" he said sily.

"Yes, you have us there," I said. "But there's nothing much in that."

"Look here," said he. "I was a fool, but I'm not in it up to my neck like Clifford and Davenant. And if you'll let me clear out at the first port, I'll stand in with you."

His small eyes searched us anxiously. He had put a good face on his bluff, but he was badly scared, I knew. We consulted together, and I think it was my voice that carried the decision. Marley announced it.

"All right," he said. "It's a bargain. Now spit it out."

Byrne breathed relief. "Jacko stole the boat," he said quickly.

"Impossible! A good clear mile!" declared Halliday.

"Oh, he can swim like a porpoise. It's like a native element to him; and he swam out last night in the dark, and crept aboard."

"By gum!" ejaculated Marley. "He's a caution!"

"Oh, there's a trifle more hanging on it," pursued Byrne smoothly, now at ease. "He hid in one of the cabins, and overheard your talk in the saloon."

I jumped up. "Marley's cabin!" I cried. "Great Scott! The pool of water on the floor."

"By gosh, you're right, old man," said Marley. "Snakes, what a caution!"

Byrne looked from one to another of us. "Well, he cleared out with the boat and his news," he resumed.

"What news?" I asked, wondering.

"Why, that you've got an interesting criminal aboard," said Byrne, with his greedy little eyes twinkling. "And he's going off on a new tack. The treasure's off, but there's a lot of oof sticking out yet, he says. And that's the Frenchman."

"Do you mean," inquired Halliday, "that he designs to rob Carvaulx?"

"That's his ticket," said Byrne. "And the boat was the first step. He reckoned we were well enough armed and numerous enough for a good shot at you. This was his notion, d'ye see? We were to pull out to an attack, and if we were successful we should have the ship and the Frenchman's money. He's got £100,000, according to Clifford; and I reckon he has got something the way he bought these men on board. That was Jacko's plan, but I didn't cotton to it. I was tired of things. T'others took it up, but I had my bellyful, and I've never been in it more than up to my knees, so to speak."

So he said, but I, for one, did not believe him, and I could have put a good reason on his treachery. He had come to the conclusion that the game was up, and thought to get out as lightly as possible. This was only practicable early in the final scenes, when we might have some need for him. In effect, he turned "king's

evidence." We naturally experienced an aversion for the man, which it was difficult to hide; but he was quite unembarrassed and shameless, offering a joke here or a jibe there, as the chance came. I think that, having made his position secure, he had rather a contempt for us, and viewed us as some queer creatures whom he was bound to serve for a while, and would dismiss with undisguised laughter. He was chatty and friendly, and entertained us with anecdotes of his former associates, despite the cold shoulder we gave him. He enlarged, among other things, upon Clifford, for whom he possessed an evident admiration.

"Davenant had the idea first," he told us amicably, "but he wouldn't have had the force to carry it through himself. He's too much of a gentleman."

"Gentleman!" growled Marley.

"Oh, he's a clever dog, is Davenant, but a bit high-strung; sort of schoolmaster. That's what he was once, they say. But, holy powers, he's hard as a wall when it comes to the crisis, and there's nothing he would stop at, as far as scruples go. That's Jacko too. God knows what Jacko was—picked up a living as a Bodega bucket-shop sharp, or something like that. You've seen him at a bottle. I believe he can do more with a bottle than any other man. He carried his liquor well, too, only that he talked too much. His nature was to be frank and bluff, and tell it out, and fight the odds. But he's shrewd as Satan, and common as dirt. And when Davenant made the suggestion, Clifford hopped on to it; and waddled on with it, and stuck to it, and worried

it, and bossed all the others into it." He interrupted his narrative to cast a glance at Marley. "He wouldn't have you in, anyhow. Said you might walk your own sanguinary plank by yourself, and he wasn't going to have two pirate kings. He laughed over it. I tell you, Jacko's a devil. But I thought it was all a joke. I'll swear I never thought we were going to have bloodshed. I joined to bring pressure to bear on Halliday to ease the contract up."

None of us believed him, but we let him go. What he was telling us was interesting in our present circumstances.

"There was a tough lot aboard," he resumed. "Some of 'em were Dagoes, and some from the Levant, and there was some from Frisco blood-boats. They didn't much want to come over to the plot. Clifford was the only one who could manage them, and he did it with a free tongue and a free bottle. Crashaw was damn useful to him, though. Crashaw knew the sailor business. And he got hold of Heaven from the start, Jacko did. Heaven came in useful as a go-between."

He paused, as if to read our faces. "And so it all ends this way," said I.

"They badly wanted you out of the way," he said, turning to me. "They tried hard too, and thought they'd fixed it up when they laid for you, using the girl as bait. Davenant worked that from your camp. There's where his cleverness comes in. You'd have suspected Jacko in half-an-hour. His tongue was always wagging. But Davenant could keep a secret. He was

in communication with Clifford all the time. It was he stole the chart. McLeod was only induced to take the key for a lark, and so put you off the scent."

"The treacherous hound!" exclaimed Marley.

"How did you get away?" I asked Byrne.

He looked sly. "Well, I agreed with Clifford that it was a good scheme, and we were to work it out well. And then I took French leave."

I could have echoed Marley's expression here, but none of us made any comment.

"You were pursued?" I asked.

He nodded. "They got wind sooner than I expected, and came pretty near bagging me too." He glanced at his sleeve, which was torn with the passage of a bullet. The man was no coward, traitor as he was.

Just then there came a knock on the door, and Ellicombe entered abruptly.

"Look here, I suppose you're in charge now, Mr. Marley, and so I've come to report. I can't get my soundings in all this blessed business." He eyed Byrne doubtfully. "Anyway, you may as well know that the old man is on his way to the island."

"What the devil!" cried Marley. "The Frenchman! Great Scott! Who—— Has he——"

"He's taken this gentleman's boat, and a couple of sailors. I guess this is too crooked for me. I want to go home to my mammy. A common or garden conundrum's good enough for me."

We all made for the deck, and our eyes alighted on

the boat two hundred yards away, rolling rapidly under a lug-sail in the direction of the island.

"Good Lord, he's running on his fate. They won't make two bits of him," cried Marley.

"This is the sequel of your interview with him," I told him. "He took alarm, and is off again."

"It's the frying-pan and the fire," said Marley. "I wasn't going to put my hands on the blighter. He's bribed those curs again."

"We can't let him go at that. We must save him from absolute murder," I urged.

Marley frowned. "We'll get into some trouble again," he said. "I don't like it. We were quit of everything here, and this means raising trouble for us."

"What does it mean, Mr. Marley?" asked a voice behind us. "Where is my uncle going? Oh, he mustn't go back to the island."

Marley and I, exchanging a glance, fell away for Ariadne to pass between us to the bulwarks.

"We don't quite know—no, of course, he mustn't," said Marley awkwardly.

"You must send after him and warn him of his danger," she persisted.

I put my hand on her arm. "He shall be overtaken, dear," I said. "We have only just learned that he had set out."

Marley was at that moment giving hoarse orders for a boat to be lowered and manned. The receding Frenchman was fast vanishing over the restless sea of broken water. The *Duncannon* herself was rolling to her

anchor in the increasing wind. The sky was dark northward, and the characteristic rocks of the Pulpit showed clear against a lurid background.

"We're in for dirty weather, I believe," grumbled Digby. "We can't afford risks for an old scoundrel like that."

Ariadne did not hear. She was engaged in watching the operation of manning the boat. The wind whistled in the sheets above. I pressed her arm.

"Could uncle be going about the treasure?" she said to me suddenly.

"Treasure!" I exclaimed, not understanding.

"Yes; when I told him he was astonished."

"You told him!" I echoed.

"Yes, of course," she said simply; "and he was so much interested in our adventures, in spite of the shock he had had."

"Did you—did he know exactly where it was?" I asked after a pause in a voice I could not keep quite even.

"I told him about the palm-trees," answered Ariadne.

"But why? Oughtn't I to have?"

"Oh, it's of no account," I said easily as I turned away, for she must not know the real character of her uncle—at least not yet. But I was vaguely disconcerted. I had been convinced that the Frenchman had taken flight in a panic on discovering that his identity was known; but was it possible that the knowledge of the treasure had actuated him? It did not seem credible, and yet I wondered. It was just that doubt and that

wonder that induced me to join the company in the boat.

We were a party of five, which included Ellicombe, two of his hands, an ex-mutineer, and myself; and we set out on a rising sun in the heat of the morning, all armed.

The young mate had entered into the spirit of the adventure, and was agog for action. Under his direction we laid a course for the cove, judging that Carvaulx would choose to land away from the mutineers. His boat was nowhere in sight, for the brisk wind had carried them fast to their destination, but as they had vanished round the bluff, it seemed certain that our conjecture was right. Our boat also took the wind splendidly, and we rode into the shelter of the shore at a gallop.

And here for the first time it was possible to read the real explanation of the flight; for the boat had been drawn up roughly above the wash of the high tides, but there had been no attempt to conceal it. Carvaulx had landed, and continued his flight in a hurry. He fled in a panic, and he fled from us. There was no mistaking this, as we traced his course by broken branches through the bushes and lost it up the hillside. He was a fugitive, and in his eyes we stood for the terrors of the law.

We took counsel together, and decided to strike through the island by way of the central ridge which culminated in the Devil's Pulpit. Ellicombe's two sailors were left in charge of our boat, while the *Duncannon* deckhand, whose name was Perry, accompanied

Ellicombe and myself on our voyage of discovery. We climbed the hill, and for some time moved in the shadow of the woods that crowned the ridge. But we heard nothing and saw nothing, nor did there appear to be any chance of finding the Frenchman.

"Might as well look for a needle in a haystack," as Ellicombe truthfully but unoriginally put it.

"There's one thing we might do," said I; "in fact, we have two alternatives now."

"What are they?" he inquired.

"We can make for the place where the treasure is hidden on the chance; or we can reconnoitre the mutineers. If they haven't got him it will be all to the good, and we can find that out."

"You mean," he asked, "go down to the seashore?" I nodded. "Yes; that's about all that's left," he assented. "Let's get."

We resumed our way, but now slantwise, towards the lower country. Ellicombe had grown more cheerful.

"I shouldn't mind a scrap with those friends of yours," he said, having in his excitement forgotten to think of his conundrums. There was a plain issue now.

"You have a good chance," I replied drily; for my part, I had had more than enough of bloodshed and trouble, and I could have put up with a drawing-room better. Moreover, I was not done with conundrums, and I was puzzling at one then. In pursuit of it, I spoke to Perry, the ex-mutineer. "Who was it went with the Frenchman?"

"Oburg, sir," he answered. "We thought as how they had orders."

"Well, Oburg didn't think so, anyway," said I.

Yet what madness could have induced this man to break with us a second time when the plight of the mutineers was so evil that Byrne himself had deserted them? Would a man be so reckless as to fling himself ashore for so much money? Oburg could not know of Carvaux's identity, nor of the large sum he was reputed to carry with him. At that point of my reflections it occurred to me that we had been very dull.

"Ellicombe," I said, "I'm a fool, and you're not much better. This man thinks he has nothing to fear from Clifford's gang, since he does not guess that they know who he is and what he's got. On the contrary, events have proved that he is mightily afraid of us. He saw us put off after him, and believes us to be in pursuit. I'll lay two to one he's sought the protection of the mutineers."

"That looks all right," he agreed. "I wish we could get at 'em."

Well, we had not very long to wait for an opening, though as you shall hear, we did not then "get at them," owing to an amazing discovery. We were half-way to the beach when on a knoll above the level of the surrounding forest we caught sight of the smoke of a distant fire.

"Eureka!" I said; and Ellicombe pulled his belt tighter and examined his revolver.

We directed our course towards the smoke, and after

twenty minutes rough walking came within the area of human voices. They were raised in anger or in merriment—we could not say which—and rose from an inner ring of trees and bushes. We pushed forward carefully, prepared for any emergency. Just then a shriek pierced the clear air of noon, and sent us forward post-haste; for it was surely the shriek of someone in mortal agony.

The human noises became louder, and I could hear hoarse laughter; and then, peering through the bushes, I looked upon a scene which struck me with horror and dismay.

In a small clearing a fire had been lighted, and round it were the remnants of the gang watching the struggles of a small figure roped to a stake. The stake had been my penalty; the stake was the Frenchman's, but in a much more terrible way. The unfortunate man had been secured by ankles and wrists, and was throwing himself this way and that in a vain endeavour to obtain his release. These frantic gymnastics invited the ribald laughter of his captors, who hurled at him obscene and vacant jests from the circle of their audience. Beside him stood two men, and one of them was Clifford, while the other I recognised as a big foreigner who had been foremost in the mutiny and the fighting. A little way off was Davenant, stripped of some of his neatness of attire, but cool and collected as usual. He appeared to be directing the operations of torture. "Turn him this way," he called in his soft penetrating voice. "I think the wood's hot enough now."

To my horror I saw the foreigner go to the fire, pick out a blazing stick, and thrust it forward at the old man. Ellicombe, at my elbow, swore and levelled his revolver. I seized his arm.

"Wait!" I said, for we should do no good to Carvaulx or to ourselves by precipitate action. "We must get the other side."

He edged away as I spoke, and I was relieved to see the foreigner lower his burning stick.

"Own up, uncle," called out Clifford. "Where's the loot?"

"I assure you, monsieur," gasped the Frenchman, "I have it not. There is no notes left, or ver' little; and that is on board."

"Give it him again, Brutus," said Clifford; and the giant advanced with his instrument of torture.

By this we had got a dozen paces away, and were stealing towards the knot of mutineers by the fire, a low line of bushes separating us.

The Frenchman screamed, and my blood sang in my head, but I was not ready yet.

"Now spit it out!" said Clifford. "Where's it buried?"

The Frenchman gulped. "If you will allow me," he said with pitiful civility, "I will explain. I 'ad bank notes when I came aboard, but they are few now, and I 'ave left them, because I 'ave this new plan for you."

Davenant said something in his low voice which I could not hear, and the ruffian heated his instrument afresh. "It is the treasure!" screamed Carvaulx, in

terror at the approaching ordeal. "I know where the treasure is. It is concealed elsewhere. See, that man—he knows!"

There was a pause. Davenant called out, and Oburg, looking sheepish and rather white, came out of the knot.

"What's all this rubbish?" asked Davenant.

"Oh, he talked of knowing where the treasure is," mumbled Oburg. "That's why I brought him along. But I didn't know he was wanted, and had this money."

"Oh, chuck it, Davenant," said Clifford. "Here, give me the dagger." And seizing the brand he waddled forward to his miserable victim. A succession of shrieks followed.

"When I count three," I whispered to Ellicombe and Perry.

"Wait a bit! Hold on!" called out Davenant, who had been talking with Oburg. "Don't be too much in a hurry, Clifford. Here, you'll have the beggar off in a faint."

He stooped and examined the Frenchman.

Ellicombe looked at me inquiringly, but I made no sign.

"I will swear on oath, sir," the wretched banker was pleading. "My niece tell me she has seen the chests, and I make her describe it. Why you think I come ashore to you, if not to place the secret in your hands? See you, there is no chance for you but to take the ship. Then there is the treasure. If I give it you, you land me somewhere safe. It is not good for either you or me to be heard of, eh?"

"I say, this looks a bit of all right," remarked Clifford.

"I bribe this man, Oburg, to come with me. I tell him of the treasure. But you do not give me time when you seize. Messieurs, you may do what you will with me if it fail."

"Damn it, that's a fair offer," said Clifford, dropping his brand.

A movement suddenly dissolved the knot of mutineers, who trickled towards the stake.

"Here, you, cut that rope, will you," commanded Clifford. "The old man shall have a run for his money."

I lowered my arm. "We're not wanted," said I drily to Ellicombe. "I guess you won't get that scrap."

"Not yet," he said thoughtfully. "But I'm not giving up hopes."

CHAPTER XXI

THE SEVENTH CHEST

"No, we're not wanted here, but we are badly wanted somewhere else," I said. "Look here, Ellicombe, we've got to act in a hurry. They're going to gamble on this."

"Certain sure," said he.

"Then there's no time to be lost. The old man has given us away. Let me have Perry here, and I'll make tracks and forestall them. You'd best go back to the *Duncannon*, and up-steam. We must have the ship round t'other side in case of emergencies. See here, I'll chalk it roughly for you." And as well as I could I indicated where the headland rose, to mark the site of the treasure.

He was quick to understand, and smart enough to take action.

"Sorry not to have had my whack," he remarked as he moved off.

"I think I can promise you it yet," I answered. The bushes parted, and he was gone. Left to ourselves, Perry and I struck out through the wood in the direction of our old camp, for I had reason for calling there. It was much as we had left it, looking desolate and tragic in its silence, under the gloom of the overhanging precipice. Here I found what had brought me—a pick-

axe, and also the coils of rope which the mutineers had intended for the removal of the chests. These were thrown about recklessly, as abandoned in the rage and consternation which had broken out on the discovery that the chests were empty. For that was the simple explanation of the mutineers' disappointment, as the sprawling chests proved. They had been got down with difficulty, only to be found bare of their former contents. Part of the hoard had been used, and for some reason in the past, the balance had been removed to a safer or more accessible hiding-place. No one would probably ever know why, or what hazards, if any, had threatened the treasure. One of the former proprietors, if I may use the term, had found it expedient to reconceal the hoard, and to leave word for his partner—Jake. And Jake had long since passed into the dust of some distant land.

These ropes were going to be useful to me. Indeed, until I had thought of them, I had been in a sad state of anxiety. Now, distributing our burden between Perry and myself, I set out to cross the ridge to the north in a cheerful spirit.

We made good speed, and reached the promontory by a forced march, if I may put it in that way. Of course, we had this advantage over the mutineers, that they had only Carvaux's indefinite information to go upon, and his was merely derived at second-hand from a woman. Dear Ariadne! I could have wagered that she had not been very explicit in her directions; for what woman has a sense of locality? Therefore I was

encouraged to hope that it would be some considerable time before Clifford's gang should blunder on the palms.

No sooner had we arrived than we set to work, without waiting to rest. A refreshment of cool water from a bubbling stream was all that we had, for we had no provisions with us. I was glad to approve of Perry, who had an open face and frank weak eyes. I did not think that he had been a mutineer of his own initiative. He had been probably constrained into this plot. All the same, I took precautions to secure him to our party.

"Perry," I said, "if you act square and faithfully in this business, it will be worth your while. I'll see that Mr. Halliday isn't ungrateful. You've been pardoned your part in the mutiny. Now see if you can earn something actively for yourself."

"I'm with you, sir," he said heartily. "I never was really with them scum, only I hadn't no choice the way they put it. Is this where we dig, sir?"

He set about his task with alacrity, wielding the pick-axe as if he loved it, and soon the earth was broken and lay loose within the circle of the six palms. It was my part to follow up his track, and scoop out the dirt, laying bare the chests. Seven they were in number, and as each was discovered to the light, Perry's energy increased. I think he would have gone on digging all day without asking for relief, so excited was he. But soon his work underwent a change. We had found the chests, and must now transport them. This was where my ropes were necessary.

I went to the verge of the cliff, from which, you will

remember, Ariadne and I had peered down into the depths, and below was the sea breaking white on a little white beach. It was a sheer descent of, as I have said, more than two hundred feet. I secured one end of my rope to a stunted tree some ten feet from the edge of the precipice, and then, having with Perry's assistance arduously dragged one of the chests up to the verge, fastened it in a cradle of ropes, and lowered it slowly. The strain on us both was great, but we had the stunted tree to break it, and foot by foot we payed out, until the sudden slackening of the rope acquainted us that our craft had anchored on the beach. I went and peered over. Yes, it had arrived safely; and now we must scramble down to release our rope, and repeat the operation with the other chests. It was laborious work, and we strained and sweated at it for nearly two hours, keeping an alert watch on our rear, and an eye also seaward, where the *Duncannon* might be expected to appear. By this time the wind had gathered into half a gale, and I was afraid that the steamer might not be able to risk putting in close enough to the shore for our purpose. Our work, however, absorbed all our energies and prevented anxious thoughts.

It was during Perry's absence that I had my first news of the mutineers. He had taken his turn to go down the hill by our circuitous route to the beach in order to release the rope, and I was awaiting his return on the cliff, with the seventh chest by my side. Suddenly my faithful ear gave me warning. Voices emerged from the scrub at my back. I drew my revolver, and

then, face to face with cold reason, put it back, and crept away into the bushes on the declivity upon the other side. It would be mere suicide to make a stand in the open against all those armed, desperate, and greedy men. So I lay low, and kept watch. A few minutes later Clifford came out of the scrub, followed by Davenant; and after him came the Frenchman, a miserable figure of exhausted senility.

"By Moses!" said Clifford loudly, "I believe the beggar's straight after all. What's that?"

He waved a hand towards the palms, and the two ruffians broke into a lumbering run. They got up to the circle of palms, and then a cry of fury burst from them, as they surveyed the loose earth, and realised that they had been anticipated. In my hiding-place I watched them with anxious interest; but I had no fears now I saw them to be only two, though I had no time to guess at what had become of the others. They stood discussing the situation for some time, and then Clifford came towards the bushes where I lay.

"That's been done during the last hour or two," he said. "I'll lay they're not far off."

Davenant, staring at the earth, suddenly called out; he had caught sight of the tracks made by the chests as we dragged them to the cliff-top. Clifford turned at his cry, and what he saw was Davenant moving quickly, with his eyes to the ground, towards the cliff. Then, I think, both of them discovered the chest on the edge of the cliff simultaneously. All I know is that both began to run for it at the same moment. They arrived almost

together, but Clifford a little behind his companion. I was aware that somehow they had wrenched open the lid, and were talking volubly and with excitement; and then the next moment they were struggling together—struggling over the chest which stood on the edge of the cliff.

It was all over in a few moments. One struck the other full in the face, and he went back on the coffer; it overbalanced, and, without a sound, man and chest disappeared over the cliff.

From below presently came a faint sound as of a distant explosion. The man remaining on the cliff peered over. It was Clifford. Then he drew back from the edge, and I could see his body heaving with his laboured breathing. Davenant had gone to death with the treasure for which he had sold his soul; and what thoughts occupied the survivor and leader of that criminal gang? Did he think he had at last the gold at his mercy? I knew not, but I think even he was a little shaken. After a little he took out of his pocket a cigar and lighted it as he stood there, resting on the branches of the stunted tree, and recovering.

I crept away, leaving him there, for in the distance, round a point of the island, I described the nose of a vessel, slowly pushing into the drama.

Clifford must know that we had removed the chests over the cliff; there was the rope to tell him everything. He must also know that we were close by, for our task had not been completed. What he did not know was our numbers. The *Duncannon* was arriving in the nick of time, if he should be reinforced by his adherents.

Where were they? I hurried down to interrupt Perry, who was doubtless on his way up, and as I hastened I meditated on many things.

Halfway down I heard a noise among the bushes, and, thinking this was Perry, I hailed him. There was no answer; but the sound increased, as of one struggling through the undergrowth. I pushed forward, and gaining the open, saw before me the small figure of the Frenchman running as fast as his short legs and tired body could carry him. I called to him.

"M. Carvaulx! A friend!"

But he only made an attempt to accelerate his pace, and get away from me. He ran, a terrified, desperate animal escaping from the hunter, his hands waving wildly in his panic. I hailed him again, to reassure him. But he paid no heed, and then suddenly tripped on a snag in the grass, and fell limply forward on his face.

When I reached him I found he was insensible, as his head had struck the stump of a tree. I lifted him up, and looked about for water, and was relieved to see Perry's face peeping through the branches.

"Come and help me," I called; "this wretched creature's unconscious. We can't in mercy abandon him, though, God knows, he has deserved it."

While he was assisting me I explained what had happened, of which he was ignorant; and I rapidly outlined my plan. We were to get back to the beach where the chests lay, and signal to the steamer. Meanwhile, the Frenchman remained unconscious, and so, lifting up

the meagre body, I set out, with him over my shoulder. Down we went, slowly now, owing to my burden, till at last we got to the sea, and turning the promontory, we perceived the steamer a mile away, with her bows on for the island. When we got to the white beach, I laid the insensible man by the water's edge, and we turned our attention to the chests. The strand of shivered shell was strewn with coins and jewels from the broken chest, and in a horrid heap amid the wreckage lay the mangled body of Davenant, that arch-traitor.

It was a sickly sight, from which I turned away as soon as was practicable. We pushed the chests towards the water one by one; and while we were engaged on this, Clifford made his appearance.

He came round the promontory deliberately, and at a slow walk, as of one who was reconnoitring; and when he saw us he halted fifty paces away.

"It's you, is it, by G——?" he called, with an obscene oath.

"I'll give you fifty seconds to round that point, Clifford," I replied; "otherwise you're a dead man."

We both had our revolvers on him, and after a moment he turned and went back. I sent Perry forward to stand sentry at the point, and I went on with my preparations. I collected what driftwood I could, and made a fire on the beach, which was designed to attract the attention of the *Duncannon*. It must have been burning for half-an-hour, when I noticed the steamer swing about, as if she was riding to her anchor; and presently a boat put off. She was then half-a-mile

away, and against the black heaven of the north figures were visible on her deck. Then I recollected the Frenchman, and I went to where I had left him. He was not there.

He must have come to himself, and, once more, actuated by his panic, have crept away, and got round the farther point, on the other side from Perry. But I had no time to consider him, for at that moment a bullet took the air with a whizz near me, and flattened on a stone. I looked about at Perry on silent sentry-work, and then up, and discerned a figure on the cliff. It was Clifford, who, headed off our flanks, had attacked us in the rear. He blazed away until I sought the shelter of the cliff, from which I watched the cautious approach of the ship's boat. It paused within a hundred yards, and I hailed it.

"It's Herapath! Stand in," I called, "but mind your eye. Clifford's shooting from the cliff."

Marley, who was in charge, gave some directions, and the boat drew nearer, and grounded heavily. Clifford's pistol rang out again.

"Hurry up," I said; "he's a dangerous devil, and he'll get one of you, if only out of spite."

But there was silence after that, and I hoped that he had exhausted his ammunition. Marley leapt ashore.

"Great Scott!" he said. "Glad to see you alive, old man. I reckoned you'd bit off too much when Ellicombe told me."

I hurriedly explained the situation, and he nodded.

"Halliday, here's your bank," he called out in his

own way; and he pointed at the chests. "Gad, this is better than shares in a gold mine." He accompanied me to the chests, while Halliday painfully scrambled ashore.

"Look at that poor devil!" he said, indicating Davenant's body with an index finger. "Yet, I suppose, it's his proper pay."

This was no occasion for regrets or for more explanations than were absolutely necessary; and we began the shipment of the chests at once.

A strange silence prevailed from the cliff; but the noise of the sea with the bluster of the wind grew greater, so that presently we had to shout at each other. We loaded up the boat with three of the chests, and she was headed for the steamer, but as the gale was rising from the north, she made progress only at a snail's pace; and those of us who remained on shore watched her with impatience. It was more than an hour ere she returned, and we began to load up again. The noises increased; and, away at sea, the steamer seemed to be trying to signal to us. Marley had gone back with the boat; and I was afraid that he feared the gale, and wished to hurry us up. However, the second load was at last shipped, and once more the boat put out in increasing difficulties.

When she returned she contained Ellicombe.

"Herapath," he called, "we must let the rest go to Hades. She won't ride at anchor longer in this gale, and there's a boat put in round the point."

"A boat!" Then this explained the mystery of the

remaining mutineers. They had come round the island in Carvaulx's boat from the cove.

"Yes; but Halliday's keen about this last load. Have you got her ready? Quick along!"

The chest which had carried Davenant to his doom had been smashed to fragments, but we had garnered the contents of gold and silver and precious stones into heaps, and the task of transferring these to the boat began. Ellicombe displayed a growing restlessness.

He was standing on the shore, with a frowning look at the darkening sky, when his gaze suddenly shifted and lightened.

"Here they are, by George!" he cried; and following his eyes, I saw rounding the point, and blundering on the turbulent water, a boat.

"All aboard!" I called. "Leave the treasure. We'll have enough on our hands as it is. I'm dead sick of it."

The men stayed in their work, gazed at the oncoming boat, and then made a rush to get aboard. Ellicombe was already in the bow, and was loading his revolver. The mutineers came on the full tide with the wind behind them, and were on us almost before we got our sail set.

"Let's have this out, Herapath," shouted Ellicombe.

"No, I'll be d——d if I'll have any more bloodshed," I cried back. "Lay her over, Carter."

The man obeyed, and with taut canvas, the boat heeled over, and began to lurch out at an angle of forty-five degrees to the course of the mutineers.

Bang! went a gun from their boat, and one of my men uttered an ejaculation. Ellicombe, still standing, replied with his weapon.

"Sit down! Cover!" I shouted, but he paid no heed.

"You promised me my scrap!" he called back, and fired again.

The mutineers were endeavouring to put round on our course, but we had gathered momentum, and she was riding fast across the swell. There was a report, and Ellicombe tumbled against the mast and fell over me.

"You infernal duffer, you've got it now," I said, picking him up.

"It was worth it," he panted. "I wish I'd had another go. I bagged one. By gosh, my shoulder aches."

I laid him down; and then the blackness which had been gradually overarching the sky fell upon us, and at the same time the rain began.

It was nearly pitch dark. Nothing could be seen on the horizon; the steamer had vanished in the mist of rain; and only the black drops falling were visible, beating up blacker drops from the foaming water. The boat plunged into the welter of foam and spurn, and we headed out in what we imagined to be the direction of the *Duncannon*. The wind was whipping round our ears like a tornado, but we kept her on a tight course for some minutes, and then tacked. This manœuvre, I calculated, would bring us into the neighbourhood of the

steamer. Nothing was to be seen or heard of the mutineers.

At the end of quarter of an hour Ellicombe, who had propped himself against the masts, called out :

“Port, port! She’s yonder!”

His practised eyes had served him well, although she was not where I had expected to find her; for the loom of the tramp emerged from the veil of mist on our left. I supported myself by the mast, and yelled through the discord of the elements. Our new direction gave us more wind, and the hull of the steamer was now distinctly visible.

“Steady; put her round!” said young Ellicombe as we came up with our nose pointed full on her; and we swung about on a huge wave towards the steamer. Figures were looking at us from the deck, and someone flung out a rope, which we secured with difficulty. Then we entered upon the painful and anxious task of getting alongside. The steamer had way on her, which explained her new situation, and which also enabled her to assist in our manœuvres. So that shortly we were bumping alongside, and able to gain the deck.

Marley met me. “I’d given you up, old man. I had to cut loose and get up steam, for she was dragging like the devil. Say, this is a mucky night.”

It was all over then, and we were safe; and I at least did not regret that we had left upon the shore that last chest of treasure, which had taken its share in the cost of lives, and was stained with Davenant’s blood. Let it rest and rot there till the crack of doom!

I had had no food since morning, and was faint with my exertions; and so I went below and obtained some necessary refreshment. But first I asked after Ariadne.

"Miss Sylvester's all right," said Halliday, with a significant look. "She's been asking about you all day."

I met her at the foot of the saloon stairs, for she had been sent below when the gale burst, and she put her arms round my wet neck, and cried and laughed.

"And, oh! Poor uncle! Where is he?" she asked.

I could give her no hope. I only pressed her to me. Not yet should she know all the truth. She sat by me as I ate, and talked as well as was possible in the noise of the sea and wind. But presently the tramp of feet shook the deck above, and there was a confusion of voices. Was there danger? I begged her to be brave, and staggered up the companionway. Blinding sheets of rain assailed me as I did so, and the tramp rocked and groaned. I was tumbled, rather than ran, to the side, and looked over. The darkness was not so deep now, as a certain twilight lightened the mist. And, to my amazement, I perceived alongside the outlines of a boat.

"Marley!" shouted a voice which I knew as Clifford's. "We've got a passenger for you. Lower a ladder, will you?"

A figure was making an effort to catch hold of the steamer as the boat slipped by, and then a trailing rope was caught.

"Shall I cut it loose?" shouted Digby to Marley, as he lifted his knife.

"What's that?" screamed Marley.

"Marley!" came the voice from below. "Here's the girl's uncle. Upon my davy, that's all we want."

"Shall we take him aboard?" said Marley in my ear.

He was bewildered, and did not know how to act at this remarkable development.

"Don't trust them, no," I cried back, and yet I thought of Ariadne.

"Marley!" shouted the voice, "give us a ladder."

But even as I watched I saw someone out of the mist and the twilight swarming up the side of the tramp. He climbed fast, and soon was level with the bulwarks; but now Marley had made up his mind at last.

"Back!" he called. "Back, damn you!"

He thrust out an empty hand to emphasise his command, and inadvertently knocked me round, so that I found myself looking into the pale face of Byrne by my side.

Clifford rose, with his arm on the bulwarks, and below other figures were moving in this reckless attempt to carry the steamer by boarding.

"By God, you first!" cried Clifford, and fired with his left hand straight into Byrne's face. Then I hit him with my fist, and he fell back, tumbling with the others into the boat. At the same time the *Duncannon* breasted a huge wave, and her snout rose out of the water. She settled again, with an inrushing flood of

water, which swept us into the scuppers. When I got to my feet Byrne's body was bumping about against the thwarts, but nothing was visible in the sea. The boat had vanished.

"She's turned turtle," said Marley in my ears. "My God, I saw her go. She was like a cockle. And that's the end!"

There could be no doubt of the fate of the mutineers, and, I supposed, of the wretched Frenchman. No boat could have survived in that sea, and in talking it over afterwards we were always amazed at the recklessness with which Clifford had played his last card. But the fact that it was his last card probably explained his action. There was nothing left for him in that ultimate scene except the forlorn hope of an attempt on the vessel in the darkness and confusion of the storm. His criminal and daring spirit had not hesitated. About us was no sound now, save the brawling of the wind and the waters, and the *Duncannon* was slowly forging away from that accursed island.

I went down to Ariadne to reassure her.

"Is it—what is it?" she asked.

"We are safe," I said. "It was the last of the mutineers."

"And—and uncle?" she asked.

I bowed my head. "It was better so. You shall know later," I said. "Rest now in safety. We are going to Kingston in Jamaica; and then you can communicate with friends in New York."

Her under lip moved pitifully. "But—but you will

come with me," she said, sobbing. "I—I am all alone."

I promised her.

Halliday, white as a sheet, and supporting himself by the rails, met me on my way up.

"It's awful, Herapath," he said, with a groan. "It's just awful. If I had known——" He paused, and his optimism and his methodical habit asserted itself through his physical and mental condition. "We must go into the allotment of shares soon's we get to Kingston. But I guess we'll fix it all right," he said.

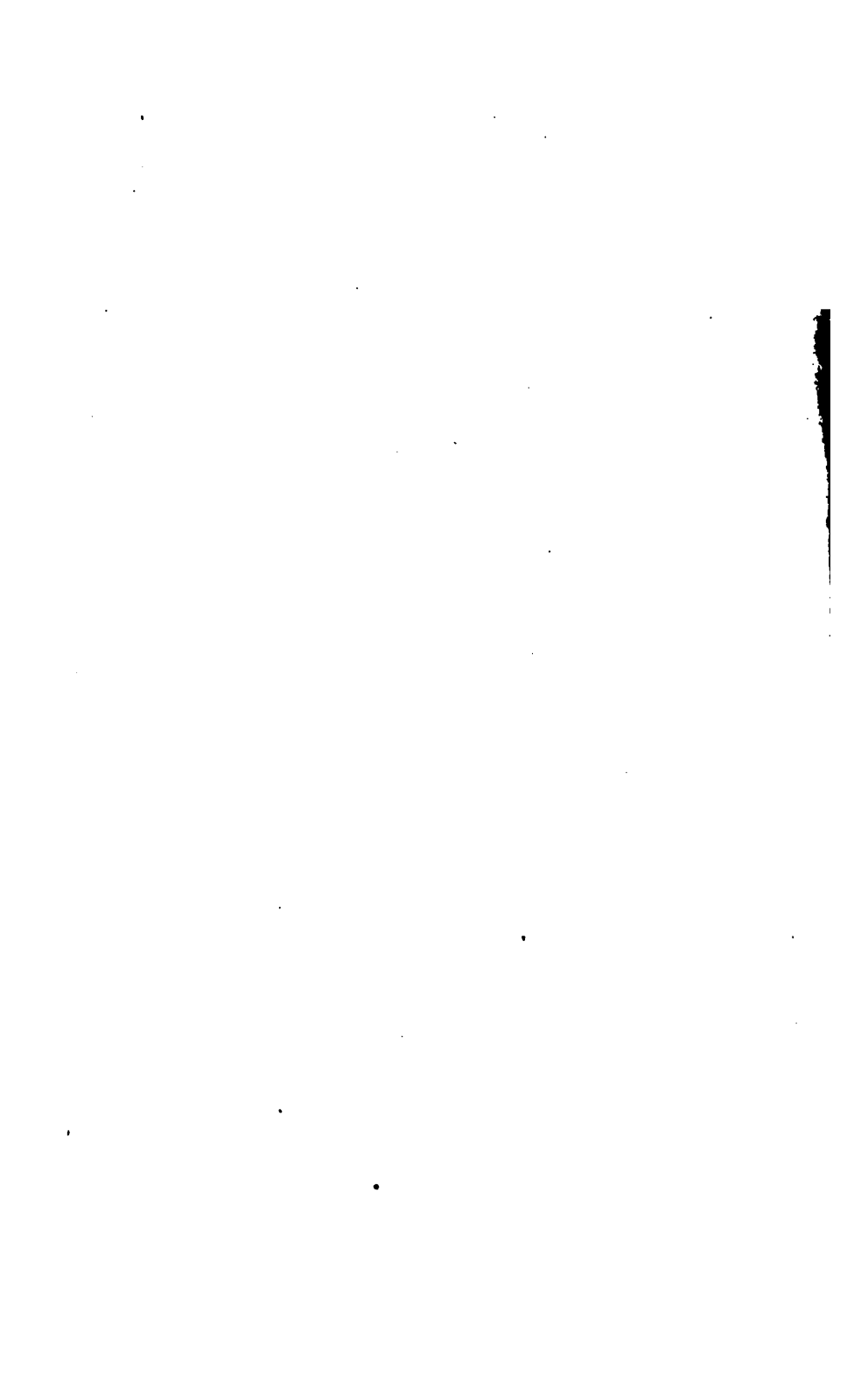
I went to my engine-room, and found Collins. He had everything in apple-pie order, like the good soul he was. I took charge.

"Full speed!" was signalled from the bridge.

Full speed it was. We were riding out of the gale like a brave tub. And in my ears was the drumming of the engines, even above the roar and clatter of water and wind; and in my eyes was the face of Ariadne, safe now from all storms and troubles in her cabin.

THE END







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